

KOHOHA KAKUTAKEI

小高和剛

ILLUSTRATION

小松崎類

サイコロ
ゲーム
が
始まる

ダンガンロンパ

DANGANRONPA / ZERO

ゼロ

刊行に先駆けて
上巻分を期間無期限・全文掲載!

全ミステリーファンを沸騰させた傑作ゲーム「ダンガンロンパ」の目眩く“前日譚”を、

担当シナリオライター・小高和剛が自ら小説化。



CHAPTER 1

Enoshima Junko despaired.

Anything and everything ended up just the way she wanted.

Everything concluded just as she had hoped, and so she despaired.

Why does it always run so smoothly?

A hot magma boiled up from the pit of her stomach and exploded as it reached her chest. It spread from her heart and flowed through every muscle in her body. Water was slowly growing around her feet, she could hear a splashing sound as droplets danced around her.

Looking more closely, you could see the water dripping down was a bright red.

She took a step and the bright red water met her feet and showered across her.

Her clothing was dyed red with blood,

Her hair was dyed red with blood,

Her face was dyed red with blood.

But the girl didn't care. She was intent on just trampling the ground.

Then, with her entire being, with everything she could muster, with her whole body and soul stomped her foot. She slammed her foot to the ground as if she were a demonic beast on a rampage... and she then yelled a curse at herself.

"This isn't it!"

Her screams echoed around her, like a stone shattering into small pebbles. But still she continued, "More! More!" She screamed, "More! I want a more despair-inducing despair!" and she continued stamping her foot to the ground.

A more despair-inducing despair... yes, that's what she wished for. She wanted the world to be in despair, and she wanted herself to be taken by despair.

"More more more! A more despair-inducing desp-" She stopped in mid-sentence suddenly.

A spark of an idea interrupted her tirade. Her surprised expression remained on her face, her entire body was dyed red stood motionless and still.

"..... That's right," she whispered to herself.

There was a tap inside her skull, like someone pressed a switch and slowly her entire brain lit up with a notion. Several faces appeared. Of course, they were faces she knew... they were the faces of her Hope's Peak Academy classmates.

"..... Урпу."

A tremble shook through her body and her lips curved into a smile. She smashed her foot to the earth once again as she cackled and shook.

"Уру... уруруруруруруруруруруру."

Her frenzied stomping became like a dance. Joy and excitement radiated through her as she danced and she found that she just couldn't stop herself.

"Amazing! How incredibly amazing!"

Remembering the faces of the people who would bring her such despair, she felt something that was similar to a person in love, and she danced to the rhythm of despair.

"This is it! This is a fantastic despair!"

Super High School Level Despair, Enoshima Junko reveled in this despair, smiling and dancing like a madman.

This is where it begun.

This is where a story that ended in despair at the end begun.

CHAPTER 2

Hope's Peak Private Academy.

Only high school students with special talents are allowed into this school sanctioned by the government. They are taught so they can become the ‘hope’ of the country. It’s a school that was deserved to be called the school of hope. Therefore, since people would say, ‘Any student that graduates from this school will become successful in life,’ it attracted some envy. Seeing as how now most graduates are employed in high positions in their profession, it would not take a genius to realize it was not a simple exaggeration. There are two requirements in order to enter Hope’s Peak Academy.

-To be currently enrolled as a High School Student.

- To be the very best in their chosen field.

There is no entrance exam required to enter Hope's Peak Academy. Since the students entering all have different talents, it would not make sense... that's one of the school's policies. Students are scouted out by Hope's Peak Academy faculty members who are also researching and teaching such talent. It is said these faculty members and staff are very much like the foster parents of talent. Finding talent and then nurturing it, to them it was a very important mission.

But, now they were...

Now the school was...

Facing a previously unprecedented and unheard of crisis.

Hope's Peak Academy, east district, faculty buildings.

The buildings lined in the east district were forbidden to student entry. Now, inside the building it was engulfed in a tranquil quietness.

The corridors that were once overflowing with the faculty members and staff are now completely empty. Private rooms, large rooms one would believe were faculty rooms, they were all deserted. Everyone who was in there were all gathered in one place.

.... Meeting Room No. 13.

Located on the top floor, holding a capacity of 300 people, it was boasted as the largest in the school. Right now, the school's faculty members had gathered in that meeting room. It was at full capacity, no seats were available at the long table crammed with people. However, it was strangely quiet.

Inside the meeting room only one person's voice could be heard.

The owner of that voice was...

Hope's Peak Academy's headmaster, Kirigiri Jin.

He was positioned at the front of the table, face to face with the faculty members who had gathered, indifferently reading a document he held in his hands. Without even a glimpse of emotion, he read each word off the page with a straight face. No different to an audio recording. Nevertheless, this was an important duty for Kirigiri. It was his duty to communicate the decision to all the faculty members. No matter how little sense it seemed to make.... no, he had no time to harbor any doubts or hesitations to begin with. If he had the time he would be attending to a number of things.

"Are you telling us to cover it up?"

A voice suddenly echoed through the meeting room.

In response he raised his head to the sight of the 300 people opposite him.

They weren't glaring or judging him, it was more as if they were staring at him, feeling uncomfortable. With little defense he felt as though they were grabbing at him through their gazes, he had a bad feeling as all the hairs on Kirigiri's body stood on end. As if trying to escape from their sight Kirigiri looked to the four people to the right of him.

They were sitting at the front of the same table, all their faces creased with wrinkles. With their eyes closed tightly, their wrinkles became increasingly noticeable. From Kirigiri's position, he could see they four's wrinkles blur together into one mass of wrinkles. The members of Hope's Peak Academy's Steering Committee's expression seemed to say they had already given up.

That's just like you... He unintentionally gave a bitter grin at the thought. *Well, it's not like I hoped for anything better from you.* He only muttered this quietly in thought so no one would hear, with that Kirigiri redirected his gaze in front of him.

From this point onward he was going to use his own words, he had decided.

"First, allow me to say something" Kirigiri went to remind them, "This is a decision Hope's Peak Academy's Steering Committee had made earlier."

The air lowered in temperature... or perhaps it was his own body temperature rising. In any case, Kirigiri wet his mouth with the glass of water in his hand before continuing.

"We know this decision may be rather abnormal."

The mass of wrinkles, that is the 'we' he mentioned, did not move at all, as though they knew from the very start the attitude he would take to express his words.

"But, do not assume we are covering this up for any other reason. If possible I would be taking responsibility for this. But, a matter of this relevance cannot be taken care of that way. It would not help even if each and every one of us took responsibility. This is something that is on an entirely different level."

Kirigiri paused to sip the rest of his water.

"Make no mistake, I do not think our decision is a perfect one. If it were, that 'parade' wouldn't be happening."

Kirigiri gestured towards a curtained window, some people turn to look at the window bitterly.

"Instead that 'parade' has been increasing recently. Those people in it hate us... and I don't think they're wrong for doing so."

At that point Kirigiri slowly looked around the room at the faces of the faculty members, he communicated his meaning clearly through his expression to everyone.

"I do not think our philosophy of 'the hope of all humanity' is wrong. But if they were to learn of 'that incident', the meaning of that philosophy is as good as gone. That is a far too greater loss for mankind... neither the support association, nor the alumni want such a thing."

The support association and alumni.... the meeting room was filled with whispers.

"And that is why Hope's Peak Academy's Steering Committee's four members and I have come to the conclusion that we should cover this up."

Kirigiri let his gaze wander to the old men again, they were as still as they were before. Leaving it entirely to him they remained silent and expressionless.

"As I have already said, we know that this decision is abnormal. But as the researchers and educators, it is our duty to protect talent. There is nothing more tragic than if hostility was directed towards those with talent. Also... we must remember one more thing."

The 300 man faculty patiently waited for Kirigiri's words.

"No matter how horrid the crimes committed were, it will not change the fact that student is a very 'special hope' we raised ourselves."

The stares of the faculty members changed.

However no one even murmured a whisper.

It was simply silent.

No one objected, what he said could not be countered.

Although his statement was perhaps narrow-minded, everyone had a similar view on the matter. They were all researchers but at the same time they were all teachers, and their students were theirs to study. They were all obsessed by that thing called talent. If you weren't someone like that, you did not belong here.

That is why they listened to Kirigiri and made their decision.

For the idea they believed in, for the future they believed in, for the hope they believed in... they would conceal The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope's Peak Academy's History.

CHAPTER 3

A yellow cat peeked out from the bush beside the pavement.

The cat wobbly stepped out from the grass onto the road while it lazily moved its tail and looked expectantly, if not thoughtfully at me. However, its eyes were immediately cautious and they soon turned to fear. As I was skipping along the pavement, the cat assumed I was a threat and quickly retreated to the bush.

But such a thing didn't matter me, the sun's cheering light covered my body as my skirt fluttered in the wind, I continued lightly skipping.

I was in Hope's Peak Academy's east district, in the courtyard.

The area was filled with newly constructed buildings and facilities and even some buildings still in construction. I almost acted like a stitch between the lines of buildings.

Taking no notice of the muddy cat, or the classmates I passed. It had been a while since I last went out but it wasn't for fun, I skipped with a destination in mind.

But, you know, I'm not the kind of girl who blatantly skips without reason.

I have a very good reason for doing so.

It's because I'm going to meet someone who I like almost unbearably~

That reason may or may not be a good one, though no student would casually skip around like I am and several students I passed shot me strange glances.

But that doesn't matter to me at all.

Girls crying, a lover's quarrel, a person stuck in a wheelchair, not even a person falling from anemia could stop me from skipping.

I want to see the one I love and I want to see him soon, my body shivered at that thought. I skipped up the stairs, not caring whether my skirt flapped too much or not and continued to skip through the courtyard.

And I kept goi-

"..... Huh?"

At that point I suddenly stopped.

"Where was it I was going?"

I looked around and realized I didn't recognise where I was. My heart thumped heavily.

It's okay... I tried to calm myself, desperately. I took out a notebook from the backpack I was carrying, I looked at the last page of the notebook and read a sentence written there. 'In the east district of Hope's Peak Academy is the biology building. On the third floor is the Neuroscience Institute.'

I felt a refreshing breeze.

Right, right, it was the biology building!

... Huh? Where was the biology building again?

My heart thumped loudly again.

It's fine, it's fine... I hurriedly flipped through the notebook pages until my eyes located a crudely drawn map.

'This is Hope's Peak Academy's east district!'

So that's where I am!

I punched the air in an unintentional pose!

I quickly jumped onto the fountain in the middle of the courtyard and compared the buildings I saw to the ones I saw on the map. There are... literature, science, physics, art, health, language and faculty buildings.

My thigh was getting wet from the stray droplets of the fountain, I was looking desperately for the biology building as if it were my first time visiting.

"I-I wonder if that's it..."

I saw a square building with a distinctive light green colouring. It seemed to line up with what I had drawn in my notebook.

"Alright!"

I jumped from the fountain and ran to the building. Some of the boys nearby looked surprised. I wonder if my skirt flew up a little too much while jumping off the fountain... that doesn't matter right now.

In any case I, though I don't remember it, have arrived at my destination.

I ran to the biology building in an incredibly fast dash, at the back of the lobby I found the stairs. I skipped up the three flights of stairs and finally arrived on the third floor. As I ran along the corridor I confirmed where I was by checking the plates on top of the doors. At the end of the corridor I came to a plate reading 'Neuroscience Institute'.

I quickly stopped.

I took a deep breath and checked my hair and smile in my hand mirror.

... Yup, cute as always!

I kept my smile to max. "Hellooooo" I entered the laboratory with a bright, full voice.... and then it happened.

Whoosh, the sound of air being cut through ran past my ear.

".....huh?"

In retrospect I said that rather meekly. I turned around swallowing a panicked feeling and saw a knife stuck in the wall next to me. I let out a yelp and jumped back. "W-Why was there a knife thrown at me?!"

There was a chiding voice from inside the room. "Shut up."

I heard that voice and my heart leapt.

While my heart was pounding I looked to find the source of the voice, a man lying on a bed in the middle of the room.

"..... You're late. Even for someone as ugly as you."

He dressed sloppily wearing a dirty white shirt. He doesn't even so much as glance away from the manga he's holding above him.

"For someone so ugly, you sure are loud. Come to think of it, acting so scared over a little scalpel is also kind of weird."

"W-Wait a moment!" I interrupted him hurriedly. "It's discriminatory to keep calling me ugly!"

"And who are you gonna report me to? The Japanese Association of Ugly People? That kind of place is discrimination just by existing."

He kept looking at his manga while continuing his ugly attack. The one who's in charge of the Neuroscience Institute, the one who's in charge of my treatment, and my childhood friend is the one that I like unbearably much.

This is the “Super High School Level Neurologist”, Matsuda Yasuke.... probably.



"Ah, I get it. You're a member of that weird association, right? Is that why you're so angry?"

"N-No I'm not! And I'm not ugly!"

"Is that right? I guess you aren't ugly after all."

I puffed out my chest, grinning, "Yeah, yeah, I know. I checked in my hand mirror just a minute ago an--"

"I meant to say you're super ugly."

"Super ugly!" I was very shocked and couldn't even think of a response. "D-Don't lie! I'm not ugly! I'm cuter than most people in this world!"

But, no matter how much I fussed, Matsuda-kun never let his eyes leave the manga book and he replied,

"I know what the world says. But I reserve judgement to myself so I can say you're ugly." He passed off my arguments as if they were nothing more than the wind.

"Well then, tell me which part of me is ugly! Tell me which clinic I can get my ugliness fixed at!" I cried out in desperation, "Is it my eyes? Or my mouth? What about my voice?"

"Your heart mostly."

"I can't get my heart fixed at a clinic!"

"Oh really? What a poor, unfortunate thing. Your face is bad and so is your personality, there's no salvation for someone as ugly as you. Perhaps you should use your ugliness as the object of sympathy? I'm sure if you stand in front of a train station with a donation box you'll earn at least a little."

My shoulders drooped as I became disappointed. With that disappointment I let my hands relax in a limp state and they hung by my sides.

"....In any case, who are you?"

"Eh?" I found his words surprising and looked up at him.

"I've only heard your voice, so I don't know who you are yet."

"You were talking to me this entire time and you didn't know who I was?"

"You still haven't said your name or anything informative, that's pretty rude."

"My name or anythi.... Look! It's me!"

"No, don't have time to look." Matsuda-kun said while indulged reading his manga, "I'm reading."

"Don't have time... It's just a manga!"

"If you asked me 'If you had to choose between the manga and me, who would it be?' I'd still be listening to you. But as far as looking, I'd choose the manga any day."

"I see, so no matter when I came here, your manga would still be more important-That's too cruel! I didn't want to be told that!"

"It's better if you just tell me who you are quickly."

"I-I get it..."

I took my notebook out of my backpack and read the cover. 'Otonashi Ryouko's Memory Notebook'.

As I read it I remembered.

I remembered my name.

"Um, it seems my name is Otonashi Ryouko.... maybe?"

"You can't even remember your own name? There's only one person I know who's that stupid."

Matsuda-kun let out a sigh.

"Well then, at least you're not a suspicious person."

".... Could it be, you threw that blade at me earlier mistaking me for a suspicious person... ? Is that what you're saying....?"

"That's right, I'm not the kind of guy who throws blades at people I know."

"That's an absolute lie!!" I pointed my finger at Matsuda-kun, "Before even checking to see who I was you said things like "You're late for being ugly" or "For an ugly person, you're really loud"! You should have realized who I was!"

Thump....

Matsuda-kun finally closed his manga. He bounced up from the bed with the help of the cushion and he determinedly walked towards me looking me straight in the eyes.

"Huh? What? W-What's wrong...?"

I stared at him and I felt a hot feeling all over my body.

"... You, did you remember that?"

"... Huh?"

Matsuda-kun gripped my shoulders firmly. He looked me dead straight in the face and slowly grew closer. In a harsh tone of voice he said "Do you remember me calling you ugly when you walked in?"

I forced myself to stare Matsuda-kun in the face. My chest was pounding and my heartbeat sky-rocketed.

"Um, well... it seems like that. Maybe I'm getting better?"

I answered and felt myself start to turn an embarrassing shade of pink. He released my shoulders and turned away from me.

With his back turned from me, I heard him mutter under his breath, "Is it really better? Or has it worsened?"

"... Huh? What has?"

"Don't worry, it's nothing." Matsuda-kun shook his head and said in a commanding tone of voice, "Right, get on the bed. Better get this over with quickly."

My heart was still pounding faintly, I put down my backpack and laid down on the bed Matsuda-kun was sleeping on just a short time ago. I felt my body on the soft sheets and smelt his scent, letting it tickle my nostrils. It's definitely Matsuda-kun's scent. I smelt it as I laid on the bed, and felt his body temperature. I felt happy, this was a feeling similar to him hugging me...

"Eheeheeheeheehee" I let out an interesting laugh, "Eheeheeheeheehee."

"Hey, are you.... laughing...?"

Matsuda-kun stared at me frowning.

"You sound like a stupid bug with the way you're laughing and you look like one too, that's too gross. Can't you try laughing at least a little more ordinarily?"

"Ahyohyohyohyohyo"

"How is that normal? If anything that's even more gross."

Matsuda-kun pulled out a rattling trolley from the corner of the room. Somehow balancing on top of the trolley was a complex machine that looked very important.

Matsuda-kun pulled the trolley alongside the bed and with a brief "Let's begin." He gazed firmly at the machine as he started operating it.

Before I knew it, I was staring at Matsuda-kun.

He had soft, smooth hair, and narrow eyes peeping out from behind it. Girlishly long eyelashes, and a pointed chin. Thin, small lips and slender white fingers-

"Gross, stop looking at me, super-ugly."

And a sharp tongue.

That's right, that's Matsuda-kun. I continued lying down and started to write something in my notebook.

"You don't have to write everything in your notebook, garbage."

"But if I don't write it down, I won't remember it." As I said that, Matsuda-kun let out a long sigh.

"... Honestly, your head is like a bottomless pit."

A bottomless pit? What an awful thing to say, but I suppose it is the case. Everything I see and hear, even if it's something awful, I forget it in an instant. I don't know why.

I don't remember a single thing.

No matter what it is, my forgetfulness can't be considered normal, that's for sure.

"But you know, it's not like I forget because I want to. I mean, there's a mental illness or something, isn't there? It can't really be helped. So be a bit nicer!"

"No, well we can't pinpoint the disease." Matsuda-kun shook his head slightly. "A human brain, like yours or mine, is very complex and we still don't know everything about it. It's almost like a black box. That's why we can't just cure this disease."

He stuck suction pad onto my face and arms while continuing to talk.

"There's a part of the human brain we call the 'Episodic Memory'. It records personal experiences and events. Then, the part that creates new memories for the episodic memory is the hippocampus. If the hippocampus is damaged or functioning abnormally, your brain can't create any more episodic memories. There's one case in particular that can be used as an example, there was a man who had a medical procedure to have his hippocampus removed. The story goes that after it happened, he lost the ability to create and store new memories. Since that incident, it's been found that the hippocampus is extremely important to form new memories. However, even if the hippocampus is damaged, it is still possible to create "Procedural Memory", like how to use a tool or how to ride a bike. Of course, you would not actually remember learning how to do it. In short, you would still remember how to ride a bike, even if not being able to remember how you learnt to ride one... that's more or less the concept."

"I see... so even though I'm forgetful, I never forget how to read and write things in my notebook." I raised the notebook in question, and nodded with a quick "yes, yes".

Otonashi Ryouko's Memory Notebook

This notebook itself acts as my memory. It's the one thing I can trust absolutely with everything. That is to say, with this notebook, I can live a more or less normal day-to-day life.

That being said, there are still many things that challenge my lack of memory in this school. For instance, while in school tests I can't review my notes, and as a result of my bad grades, I've been suspended from sch-

"Huh? I've been suspended from school!?" I unintentionally yelled at my notebook, "My grades have been that bad? That's awful!"

"Just be thankful you haven't been kicked out all together. I had to talk to the school officials just to stop them from doing that."

"Huh? You stood up for me?" My chest tightened in delight, "I'm so happy! Ehehe, you did such a kind thing for me!"

Matsuda-kun only scoffed at my comment.

"..... I just couldn't risk having my precious research taken from me."

Even so, Matsuda-kun had taken the time to do such a nice thing!

"In your case, your brain doesn't seem to be able to retrieve long term memories. Perhaps the synaptic connections joining your brains neurons have been damaged. I can't know for sure until I examine them in more detail."

"I don't really understand what that means... but I'm just glad I haven't been kicked out! If I had been expelled I would have been forced to live on the roadside!"

I don't really have anywhere to go besides this school. I forgot everything else. I don't remember my family or anything.

"And also, it means we wouldn't get to spend any more time together if I dropped out." Being apart from Matsuda-kun... To me, that was unbelievably scary. I trembled a little just saying it.

"Don't worry about such a stupid little thing."

Matsuda-kun put it bluntly.

"You're extremely good research material that I'm not willing to let go of so easily... for now."

"But... that's just for now!"

I guess I'm happy, but I need to make sure I don't cause any trouble.

"Stop complaining. You should be honoured you're such important research." Then he said in a condescending manner. "In order to understand what triggers amnesia, we need to find the molecular mechanism that it's connected to. Once we find that, our understanding of memory will improve a tenfold. We'll be able to create medications to improve memory. Then, maybe in the future, we'll be able to even store backups of our memories on hard drives... if it's possible to create that sort of system. Actually, there are studies delving into that currently in foreign countries. By suppressing Protein kinase M zeta, it's been found it's possible to erase a lab rat's long term memory."

"I see, I see!"

I didn't really understood, but I raised my voice so it sounded like I did.

"In any case, I'm super happy I can help my beloved Matsuda-kun!"

"A girl with such a hollow mind is going to say hollow things. You really are a hollow girl in the end."

I worried since I was so idiotic. I didn't understand what he meant at all. But, that's Matsuda-kun for you.

Matsuda-kun insisted I take care of myself, though I oppose him on that. He always put things very harshly and curtly, not bothering to be delicate with someone like me. But then again, it was troublesome when people would always act sympathetic to me, so in the end Matsuda-kun spoke to me with just right attitude.

"Well, even if I'm hollow, I'm still super happy! Because I'm helping my dearest Matsuda-kun, whom I love so much!" Not at all discouraged by his words I yelled out that, and he muttered something in return.

"Well, you are certainly helpful... since you're such a rare case..."

"You said rare! That makes it sound so special!!" I was happy to be given such praise. "... Hey, you said rare, so what's rare about it? Hey, tell me! Heeeey, heeeeeeey, tell me, tell me!"

"Heeeey, heeeeeeey, shut up." Matsuda-kun spat out while releasing another sigh, "I guess I won't tell you now, since you're getting too excited for your own good."

"It's fine, It's fine! Tell me, tell me, tell me!"

My efforts paid off and Matsuda-kun finally told me.

"It's just strange that someone with such brain intensive ability has ended up with memory loss, that's what I meant."

"... Ability? Brain intensive?"

I thought about it briefly and couldn't think of what he was talking about.

"It's fine if you've forgotten... I hate it when you use that ability of yours on me. To be truthful, I'd prefer it if you never used it on me. Got it, you stupid bug?"

I didn't really understand but hey, he insulted me! I know I caught that much!

"Well, I don't mind if I don't remember, I get to spend all these intimate moments with Matsuda-kun and so I'm kind of glad I have this illness!"

"I already explained, it's not an illness."

Matsuda-kun hid the grin on my face by placing more suction pads on my face.

"But, I have to admire that carefree attitude of yours. Even in such a serious predicament, you still laugh and smile. Shouldn't you be worrying?"

".... Eh? Why would I be worrying?"

"Well, you know," Matsuda-kun said with a surprised expression, "You don't seem to care at all about what I've been telling you. For instance, whether your symptoms will ever be cured... or whether you'll always be like this."

"..... Eh?"

I made a shocked face. There was something funny about what Matsuda-kun was asking me.

"Ahahaha, not at all!"

And so I laughed.

"So what if I only remember things around me right now? It's not like I can remember having a good memory, so I have nothing to really compare myself to. So I don't think this "forgetfulness" is really such a drawback. That's more or less.... what I've been thinking."

"Your memory loss isn't a disadvantage... ? But aren't you worried at all about when it began? Or when it'll end?"

"Hmmm, I don't really care. I mean, once I'm cured the treatment will be over. But when that happens I won't be able to meet with you anymore, that's the only thing I'm worried about."

After I said that, there was a strange silence.

The silence continued for a while until Matsuda sighed and muttered,

"You should worry."

His voice was low and depressing.

"What if you'll always be like this....."

"Huh..... ?"

He suddenly looked up, his face peeking out from behind his dark hair. He looked stiff, deep in thought.

"Matsuda-kun?"

He reacted finally when I called his name.

"No, it's nothing... " He looked as though he was trying to figure out something in his mind. He waved his hand to imply that is really was nothing to fuss over. "It's really best that you don't get too depressed over your symptoms. It's good that you're so carefree over it."

"Well, my mind is flexible after all!"

"Yeah, I'd definitely say flexible. Given that you've forgotten your family and friends, and everything about yourself from before your amnesia struck."

"Like I said, I don't mind forgetting any of those things as long as I'm with you. Since I've forgotten about being with anyone else, I figure they just have nothing to do with me anymore."

"Those words again." Matsuda-kun said while taking a brief moment to blink. "If you keep saying they have "nothing to do with you" then aren't you afraid you'll end up no longer being you?"

"It's fine, since I'm with you!" I answered him cheerfully, full of confidence. "Since you're the only person I really remember, as long as I'm with you I'll never be alone."

"No, you only remember me because I'm part of the "treatment" and your "procedural memory". That's the only reason."

"You said I'm wrong, but I don't think I am."

"Ah, I get it." Matsuda-kun said, trying to get me to quiet down. He continued attaching the suction pads pausing briefly to scratch at his chest through the gap between the buttons on his dirty shirt. Did he really understand what I was trying to say? He was probably just tired of dealing with me. Maybe he didn't believe me when I said I "remembered" him.

But I do.

Certainly, what I call “remembering” is probably a little different to what a normal person would. But I was telling the truth.

I remember Matsuda-kun.

I’ve forgotten him, but I still remember him.

I don’t remember any of our conversations or what we’ve done together. But that doesn’t mean I don’t remember him. Those kinds of things are best left in my notebook. What I remember is something more important and special. What I remember is a feeling, rather than a memory.

It’s not something I remember in my head, nor something in my mind. What I remember are “feelings” for Matsuda-kun. But when I do see him I remember the feelings I have in my heart, and it feels like it’s trying to tell me he’s something important. He is absolutely irreplaceable to me.

So, no matter how forgetful I become, I’ll never forget Matsuda-kun. The connection between Matsuda-kun and I are more than just memories. In short, the bond we share is a miracle, and-

"Would you shut up already?"

"Eh?"

My mind quickly returned to the real world.

"H-How could you hear my thoughts?"

I was about to jump away but Matsuda pinned down my head.

"If you move around too much the cords will come off, what a waste of human life." He said those harsh words as though he thought I really meant to pull off the cords.

"But I wasn’t even talking aloud... Ah, you told me to shut up, is it possible you were telling me pounding heart to shut up? That’s impossible, impossible, impossible! If it stopped beating, I’d die!"

"I was talking about outside."

"Huh? Outside?"

Matsuda-kun raised his chin and pointed to the window. As I listened, I could hear a variety of strange noises coming from the other side of the window. Jeers, roars, hooting, accusations and repulsion all combined to make something that sounded almost as if the earth was trembling. It was a collection of harsh, hate filled voices.

".... What is that?"

"It's the "parade". Honestly, it's been growing louder and louder every day."

"Parade, you don't mean *THAT* parade, do you?!"

"Bull shit. You don't even remember what I'm talking about." Matsuda-kun hit my forehead, then he put on a serious expression and continued with his explanation. "To be straight, it's a demonstration. The faculty though, or rather, those idiots from the steering committee decided it would be better to give it a ridiculous name like "parade"."

"... But a parade isn't really a demonstration, is it?"

"That's exactly the point."

"Although, a demo isn't really... it's not shocking!"

Matsuda-kun decided to just ignore me.

"It's the people from the preparatory school."

"The preparatory school?" I don't think I've heard of it before, have I?

"You really don't remember after all. Well, it can't be helped for someone with such a large head like yourself."

"Wait! It's sexual harassment to call a girl's head large! You're like someone straight from the Edo er-Oof" Matsuda-kun pushed me down by my head just as I was about to stand again.

"Firstly, Hope's Peak Academy isn't an institute purely for teaching, unlike other schools. Here, talent isn't only taught, but it's also researched. It's the same for the teachers, they're not only here for teaching but also they're here as scientists. But scientists are nasty things. They tried to advance their research more, but there was something they were lacking... do you know what it was?"

"Um... it was probably..."

"Funds."

"Ah, that's it!" I was disappointed I lost my chance to answer and ended up only saying a little.

"Up until now, Hope's Peak Academy gained its funds from government grants and donations from the school's alumni. But many felt as though the school was not receiving enough funding, and their research was slowed. The steering committee was obviously disappointed. Thus, in order to further pursue talent, they created a preliminary system."

Hm, hm, I nodded my head and hummed in agreement.

"The point is, there's us, the "super high school levels", or the regular students, and then there are the reserve students. We're all situated in the east district while they're all in the west, so we don't know much about each other, but... what I do know is they seem to be completely different to us. Firstly, they don't seem to be scouted out, and they have to sit through a normal high school entrance exam. Secondly, our school teachers are scientists who live at the school, while they bring the preparatory school teachers from outside."

"So then, it's just a normal high school?"

"Yeah, that's right. But even so, the school was flooded with applicants from students. Brand power really is something." Matsuda-kun spat those words. "That said, as far as the public were concerned, this private school which up until now had only scouted its students had opened its doors for everyone. Of course people would flock to such a brand name. Also, this place was able to collect money by people paying with an arm and leg just to get in. So, this place has become much more crowded recently. Of course, the school grounds have widened a fair bit and much to the envy of many experts, we've built more top of the range facilities, one after the other. This school has rapidly grown in size. It's just, no one would have thought Hope's Peak Academy would have changed so dramatically in size in just two years, and that's the story about the power of the steering committee."

"But isn't that kind of a rip off?"

"It seems like it, but it's just the kind of world we live in." Matsuda-kun distorted his face into a bitter smile, and then he continued. "Right now, Hope's Peak Academy is set up in a pyramid sort of idea that a third world country would use, it's only really there to concentrate its effort on the "super high school levels", for their benefit, and then below them are the reserve students from the preparatory school. Apparently it's possible to move up from the preparatory school to the regular school... but it's questionable as to whether anyone has actually managed it. The teachers here don't really think any of the reserve students really belong here."

"Huuuuuh, they shouldn't be teacheeeers"

"Well they are teachers, but more importantly they're scientists, and they're not interested in those students. That's what it seems like to me. They have their eyes set on the "talent of humanity"."

"But that's totally unfair!" As I said that, I puffed out my cheeks without thinking.
"Of course it's unfair. If it wasn't, that demonstration wouldn't be happening. But, having said that..." Matsuda-kun cut off there and changed his tone of voice, "I don't think it was them who planned this. It's more likely someone else's plot... I feel like that must be it."

"Eh..... ?"

Matsuda-kun narrowed his eyes towards the window. The roughness from his glare caused me to hesitate to say anything.

"Oy, ugly." After a while Matsuda-kun said something after remembering, "Make sure you write down some of our conversation in that notebook of yours. You can't just brush it off as "it's not my problem." Those reserve students don't seem to be very interested in us. Well, I don't think they'd attack you or anything... but it pays to be careful."

"Right, got it." I replied. I noticed my face was so covered in suction pads that I could barely move my mouth.

"I'm going out for a while. You can sleep if you want." Matsuda-kun only said that and started to walk away from me.

"But, I'm not sleepy at all.... " My voice filled with anxiety and just outside of my peripheral vision I could hear Matsuda-kun answer.

"In that case why don't I give you some sleeping pills? Say, around a dozen?"

"... Eh? Wouldn't that be a lethal dose? Is that really okay... ?" I could feel myself grow increasingly worried until Matsuda-kun came back. On top of his stained, white shirt, he was now wearing a school jacket.

"Don't you dare touch any of my machines while I'm gone, or I'll kill you."

"So where are you going?"

"Just on a few small errands. In any case, don't you dare touch any of my machines while I'm gone, or I'll kill you" I could tell he was being serious, because he repeated it.

"But, I wouldn't mind if it was Matsuda-kun who killed me."

"I don't want to. That's too grotesque for me." Not as grotesque as someone who spends all day studying the human brain, of course I wouldn't say that out loud to him. "Ah, so! When you've come back from running those errands, let's watch a movie together!"

".... a movie?"

"Um, yeah... what was it called again... ?" I flipped through my notebook to see if it contained any memories of any movies. "Ah, this is it! Let's see, it takes place at the McCallister household where two robbers, Harry and Marv tr-"

"You don't mean Home Alone, do you? It's no surprise you've already forgotten, but you bugged me about this movie before, a lot, so we've already seen it."

"Oh, have we? Um, well then... " I flipped through my notebook again looking for memories of other movies I wanted to see, but Home Alone was the only one written down. It's just his own fault for letting me watch it. "Well, I'm sure it was a masterpiece! It'd definitely be interesting to watch again!"

"It certainly wasn't a bad movie, but I don't think it's something I would normally watch again."

"Normal? Did you say normal? Then what would you norma-"

"Stop asking me stuff that sounds like it came out of a junior high school girl's diary." He looked at me with disgust. But I was determined not to give up.

"That's fine! I've got a feeling that it'll be just as interesting to watch it a second time!" Then I flipped through my notebook quickly again, "Ah! According to what I wrote down, the star, Macaulay Culkin, is super cute! He's cute! Isn't that great?"

"Why would I think that's great? Anyway, his name is Macaulay Culkin, Wacoal are women's underwear."

"Ahaha! It says here that he's ultra cute and I wanted to adopt him for my own!"

"But you don't know what Culkin-kun looks like now. You sound like a pervert."

"A-A pervert...." I was beaten down by his sharp tongue. Matsuda-kun narrowed his eyes more while sweeping his bangs away from his face.

"It's fine, just shut up and go to sleep already." Apparently, it seemed like he was done talking to me.

"Wait! Don't go!" I said desperately trying to stop him, "I don't want you to! No, no no! I'll be lonely if you go! It's been such a long time since we last met up and I'll be lonely when you leave!"

"..... A long time?" Matsuda-kun stopped suddenly in mid stride, "Why do you think it's been a long time since we last met up?"

"..... Eh?"

"I asked you why do you think it's been a long time since we last saw each other..." With his back turned his voice sounded like he was pushing back a painful feeling, having heard that I was only confused.

"Um... well, because... because I can feel my heart thumping...." That was the excuse I used.

"So, your heart wouldn't be pounding so loudly if we saw each other every day?"

".. Uh, no, that's not it! That's not what I meant..."

"Anyway, we saw each other yesterday."

".... Eh? Really?"

"Just as I thought, your memory isn't getting any better...." Matsuda-kun slackened his posture, looking disappointed, "So then, you lied about being able to remember me too..."

"W-Wait a second! Don't jump to conclusions!" I hurriedly flipped through my notebook from start to end, but I didn't find any mention of meeting with Matsuda-kun yesterday. I looked up again but couldn't see Matsuda-kun anywhere.

".... tch!" He won. Well there's nothing more I can do. Aaah, Jeez, I guess I have to sleep then. Well, there's nothing wrong with that. At least if I sleep I can immerse myself in my dreams, away from this lonely place without Matsuda-kun and into my dreams of him. Feeling such hope in my chest, I moved onto my side, being careful not to remove any of the suction pads on my face, and I smelt Matsuda-kun's scent on the pillow, as if I were a

puppy. “Hohoho” I pressed my cheek against the pillow, “Hohoho, Matsuda-kun’s scent” Then I closed my eyes.

My vision blacked out and my other senses sharpened. Soon my entire world was filled with the smell of Matsuda-kun.

No, that’s not all. I could hear a voice somewhere, like it came tumbling into the world of Matsuda-kun and me. It was... a lot of voices, overflowing with hate. They pounded in my ear and filled me with uncertainty. I quickly tried to block them out.

... It’s not my problem.

But I think I’ve forgotten how to fall asleep, I can’t go to sleep quite yet, but I want to soon. If I fall asleep I can go over to the world where Matsuda-kun is. I want to see Matsuda-kun again.

Matsuda-kun, Matsuda-kun, Matsuda-kun, Matsuda-kun, Matsuda-kun, Matsuda-kun, Matsuda-kun, Matsuda-kun.

As I thought more about seeing Matsuda-kun in my dreams, I slowly, peacefully fell asleep.

CHAPTER 4

10 minutes after Matsuda Yasuke left the lab.

He had arrived at a building with a door that practically oozed a grave atmosphere. He felt tense. He wanted to tell himself off for having such a stupid response, but at the same time he understood why he felt like that. It was the first time he had entered the faculty building. This place was, so to say, Hope’s Peak Academy’s centre. Although the facilities for the regular students were in the east district, this was the only place they were forbidden from entering. On his way here he had to explain himself many times to the faculty teachers who stopped him. Inside the faculty building there was an especially special place.

Matsuda Yasuke raised his head and his eyes met the door to the room.

The wooden doors were immensely decorated. It overflowed with a feeling that no one was allowed to enter them. The plate on the door read, “Hope’s Peak Academy’s Steering Committee Room”. It was as if this was the very centre of the building in the centre of Hope’s Peak Academy. This room was a special place where students and even staff rarely entered. This was the only place no one could even possibly talk about without feeling nervous. But anyway...

"... Pull yourself together." Matsuda quietly cleared his throat.

The atmosphere was so intense it was almost impossible to muster up any courage. He held fist up and knocked on the door two times.

"Batch 77 of Hope's Peak Academy, I'm Matsuda Yasuke." He slowly opened the heavy door. "... Excuse me"

The atmosphere in this room was clearly different to any classroom on campus. The ceiling, pillars and walls were all extravagantly decorated, and gave a very heavy, dignified impression. Matsuda took a step forward, his footsteps were absorbed by the carpet.

"We are sorry for calling you all the way here." There was an unexpectedly light voice. It was the voice of Hope's Peak Academy's headmaster, Kirigiri Jin. No matter how many times Matsuda sees him, he always thinks the same thing. *That guy really is young.*

When Matsuda thought of principles, he would imagine an old man with a grey moustache, wearing a plain suit. So, Kirigiri Jin, despite being in his thirties, looked younger.

"In any case, please take a seat. We don't expect you to stand while talking." In the centre of the room was a large, circular table, around it were several antique chairs.

"Excuse me." Matsuda sat on the chair closest to him, it was directly opposite to Kirigiri's seat.

The moment he sat down, he could feel the gaze of several people on him. Around the circular table sat four older men, each spaced at regular intervals, all staring at Matsuda. They all dressed in jet black suits and ties, as if attending a funeral. Matsuda felt them evaluating him, as discomfort flooded his breathe.

"Do you know who we are?" One of the old men began, his voice was grainy.
"You're the steering committee, aren't you?"

"We seem to be indebted to you for your help over "that incident"."

"..... What do you mean?" The wrinkles on the old men deepened at Matsuda's response. They seemed annoyed that he avoided the topic.

"You don't need to be so cautious. We know everything about it." Another of the old men spoke out. "We know you're the one who helped us interrogate the student who was first to discover the scene."

The first to discover... as soon as Matsuda heard those words, his heart begun thumping. After hearing that he immediately replied.

".... Are you asking me to interrogate them again?"

"No." Another old man said, shaking his head. "We wish to investigate another student.

However, there is a problem. Thankfully, this problem is exactly in your field of expertise. That's why we want your help."

Judging from what they said they had already decided. There was that kind of feeling in the air.

"..... What if I refuse?" There was a silence. One of the old men laughed. Quietly at first, but it slowly grew louder. Soon the other's joined in... 2 people, 3 people, they were all laughing now. The laughter seemed to ridicule him, echoing throughout the whole room and stabbing him from all directions.

"Oy, Matsuda-kun.... " Suddenly the laughter stopped. "Do you think you really have a choice?" The voice was filled with a condescending tone. "That patient you're treating... despite her absence from school her health doesn't seemed to have improved at all." Matsuda frowned.

"... What are you saying?"

"You're still a student. We'd rather not have you wasting time on a child that has no chance of being cured." Those words filled with cynicism floated around the room. "That is to say, we can't really afford to continue housing a student that will most likely not be returning to classes. This is a place to nurture talent. Those idiots who aren't up to it should just leave. But, that being said, if you agree-"

"Shut the fuck up, old man!"

"... Wha?"

"Blah blah blah, you're only spouting fucking nonsense." Quickly the atmosphere of the room changed, and the tension rose.

"... W-why you insolent"

Matsuda stood up and the old man froze. He stared at all of the older men-No, there was a lot of anger and contempt put into it, so it was more of a glare. It was the look you gave an insect when stomping on it.

".... Drop out? Idiot? Let me tell you one thing, I'm the only one who can call her those thing!"

"... Y-You should le-"

"I said shut the fuck up." Matsuda easily quieted the men by saying that and then he continued in a soft voice. "People might call her an idiot, but she doesn't even bother to stick up for herself, thinking she can't do it. So I don't think I'd be able to forgive myself if I don't do it for her."

He looked at the steering committee, the atmosphere wasn't really macabre or anything, it was just intimidating. How was someone who was still only a teenager able to control a situation with such ease? No, they should have already known the answer to that. It was the power of talent, and it was the power of Hope's Peak Academy's hope.

"... Ah, may I say something?" A new voice cut in. It belonged to Kirigiri. Matsuda redirected his gaze to him. "It's just that I would like to contribute a little to this conversation.... "

Kirigiri put on a wry smile and scratched his head. His attitude seemed very laid back and relaxed. His momentum shattered, Matsuda slowly closed his eyes, let out a large sigh and sat down again. Having watched Matsuda do so, Kirigiri continued in a calm voice.

"Matsuda-kun, this is only a request. However, this isn't just us asking this, this is all of Hope's Peak Academy. The thing is, we'd like you to listen what we are telling you and help us."

Matsuda stared at Kirigiri in silence, still trying to weigh what he was saying. Kirigiri glanced at Matsuda and went on.

"This is just a rumour but... having heard it I think it may be more." After having covered that he delved into the main issue. "After all this time, I do not think it is necessary to explain what "that incident" is. But it may be good to start from there to refresh your memory."

He cleared his throat and raised his hands so they were in front of his chest. He glanced at all the people in the room and continued.

"I can't believe it's already been a month since it happened. Since such an appalling incident occurred at this school. It already seems like nothing more than a bad dream."

"But it really happened!" One of the old men yelled out, interrupting him.

"Thirteen people!" Another shouted. "Thirteen victims and we still know little to nothing about what happened! How could this have happened at our school!"

Now that their voices had subsided, there was something Matsuda wanted to confirm.

"... So then, you still haven't contacted the police?"

"Of course not! What would happen if we did contact them? How would that solve anything? This isn't simply a matter of catching the culprit!"

"But... what about the relatives of the victims?"

"That doesn't matter!" An old man interrupted, "You don't need to worry about that!"

Judging from what they were saying, it seems there was a lot of things already happening behind the scenes. They must have been asking a lot of graduates in high places to pull some strings. For a place like Hope's Peak Academy, of course they'd have many powerful connections. But, if a place like Hope's Peak Academy fell, it would be bad for mankind.

"Fine, I won't worry about it. So then, what was it you wanted me to do? You said something about "another person" you needed my help with."

"We need you to help us extract information from that person to help us clarify the truth behind "that incident"." Kirigiri replied.

"You say clarify the truth, but aren't you trying to cover it up? Isn't that just a contradiction?"

Covering it up. Matsuda was the only student to have been told of that. He promised to cooperate with the school, if he was given better facilities and equipment. In that sense, he was just another scientist.

But, that's not the real reason why he's cooperating. But no one besides Matsuda knew that.

"Indeed, it certainly sounds like a contradiction." Kirigiri replied after some hesitation.

"However, I believe it is a necessity, if we wish to thoroughly hide "that incident".

There's still too many things we do not yet know. We cannot hide something we do not fully understand. So, first we need to discover the full picture behind "that incident". We must completely cover it up, for Hope's Peak Academy's sake."

As he said that, Kirigiri's gaze did not stray.

We need to do anything we can to protect Hope's Peak Academy... together. You have to sacrifice something in order to protect something. Though, we're not entirely working together.

That's what Matsuda thought.

"..... So then, who is it? This student you want me to interrogate."

Kirigiri wet his lips and answered Matsuda carefully.

"We did not mention this to you before but... in addition to the person you knew of who discovered the scene of "that incident", there were two survivors."

Two survivors... that's the first Matsuda had heard of them.

"Of course, we are certain they have some information on the incident in question. We would have questioned them immediately after the incident to hear their story but we were unable to due to some circumstances beyond our control."

"... Circumstances?"

"One of the students never recovered consciousness and is still in comatose. The other student is fortunately unhurt... but went missing. Their whereabouts are still unknown."

One in comatose, and the other is missing. In that case it's impossible to question either of them. But, there's still some possibility...

"To summarise, you're asking me if I can learn anything from the student currently in comatose?"

Kirigiri nodded his head, "Yes."

Learning the truth in order to hide it. It feels like there's something distorted in that line of thought. But, in the end this request was convenient for Matsuda.

This might be your chance.

This might be your chance to protect her.

".... Understood." Matsuda finally answered.

"... Please do what you can."

"Can you manage it?" One of the old men had shot up out of his chair quickly and was leaning forward with momentum.

"I can't say for sure yet. It depends on what they're like. But I will do my best either way." Matsuda replied bluntly and returned his gaze to Kirigiri.

He had one more thing he wanted to ask him.

"What will you do about the missing person? I'm sure you don't plan to just let them roam freely."

After a short silence, Kirigiri leaned forward and watched him.

"... Is there something you're worried about?"

Kirigiri narrowed his gaze into a glare and Matsuda found himself desperately wanting to look away.

"No, I was just curious." Anxiety filled his voice, he tried to hide it though. "But isn't it suspicious, going missing? I mean, what if he's the murderer. The person who's in a coma couldn't have done it... that's just what I was thinking."

At that moment, the steering committee begun to mutter to themselves. However, Kirigiri kept his composure.

"Indeed, it is certainly suspicious they went missing in such circumstances."

"That's why-"

"That's why what?" Kirigiri forcefully cut off Matsuda's words. "If we do not uncover the truth behind "that incident" it will be the end for this school."

The end? His choice of words caught Matsuda's attention.

Perhaps there was something special about that student. One student's name in particular wandered into Matsuda's head. It was a name he had only heard in rumour.

Up until now he had only thought it was an urban legend or something out of an occult.

But if that person really exists, then surely they have something to do with this.

If that's the case, it makes more sense.

It makes more sense to refer it as "The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope's Peak Academy's History".

This could reasonably be called the worst.

As that thought came to mind, a drop of sweat ran down Matsuda's forehead.

CHAPTER 5

Ahhhhh.....

ZZZ...

Zzz zzZZzz zz ZzzZ ... ZZZAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!

I felt something pulling at the skin on my face very hard, it hurt so much I jumped to my feet. Next to the bed I was on, there was a man holding the suction pads and cords that were on my face. My heart was pounding.

"Ah! Matsuda-kun? You're Matsuda-kun right?"

As I said that I ran towards him, and as if he were a bullfighter he easily dodged me. It was like I was the coyote being tricked by the road runner, I crashed into the wall and saw stars.

"Ugh... W-Why'd you dodge me... ?"

"Because your face is disgusting."

"T-that... to call a pure maiden's face disgusting... " I lightly walked to the desk to look at the mirror on it. There were disgusting violet spots the size of 10 yen coins spotted all over my face. "... It's your fault for pulling off all the suction pads so violently!"

"I was in a hurry so I had to."

"I wouldn't mind, even if you wet your pants in front of me."

"... I didn't mean I needed to hurry to the toilet."

"I knew it! Matsuda-kun isn't a toilet after all!"

"What the hell kind of weird fantasies have you been having about me, super ugly?"

"Of course, since the beginning of recorded history, there have been few wiser statements, right?"

"You need to stop including me in your weird fantasies." Matsuda-kun breathed out a large sigh. "That's enough, if I keep talking to you I'll go crazy as well." As he said that he began cleaning up the trolley. "In any case, I still have more errands to run today. So hurry up and go home already."

"Huuuh! But!" It couldn't be helped, but it didn't stop me from objecting with all my power. "I can't! I can't! If I do I'll be lonely again!"

"Honestly, you're hopeless..." Matsuda-kun squinted his eyes and walked up to me, he softly grabbed my shoulders.

"Close your eyes."

"..... Huh?"

"It's fine, just close them."

As I looked at Matsuda-kun's face right in front of me, I could feel my heart pound against my ribcage, then I did as he asked and closed my eyes.

For some reason, my body felt hot. It felt so hot it was like I was melting. The blood vessels behind my ears were making a profuse, pulsing sound. It was that sort of situation. With an amazing momentum, it's turned into one of those cliché things! Yup, that's it!

And so, with those expectations in mind, my heart started going THUMP, THUMP, THUMP, and Matsuda-kun would sneak behind me. So I casually leaned back... ever so slightly... and Matsuda-kun pushed me out into the corridor.

"Ow!"

With the extra momentum, I ended up falling onto my bum in the middle of the hallway. It was a good thing I was wearing clean underwear, at least.

"Our next session is in three days. Don't leave your dormitory unless you have to."
Matsuda-kun only had that to say after I fell down so dramatically. With that, he closed the rattling door.

"Owww... He tricked me..." My shoulders drooped, as I felt disappointed. Unhappily, I left the Neuroscience Institute.

After I left the biology building, I checked my notebook. Even if I have to go back to my dormitory, I don't really remember where it is. So as I was walking, I flipped through "Otonashi Ryouko's Memory Notebook".

As I looked through it I found a sketched map of the school. Since I had found it, it was a good chance to thoroughly review it. While I'm at it, I'll explain the floor plan of Hope's Peak Academy.

Well then, well then...

According to my map, Hope's Peak Academy is shaped like a huge diamond. It has four sections in total, the east, north, west and south districts. Each district could be compared in size to a normal high school. Right now, I'm in Hope's Peak Academy's east district, but it's also sometimes called the centre. This is where the building for the regular school's staff reside. There's also a building here which is still under construction, the biology building where Matsuda-kun is, and a variety of buildings that would leave experts in pure jealousy. Furthermore, students are forbidden from entering faculty building here.

Then there's the west district. Here are a number of facilities and buildings for the reserve students at the preparatory school. It seems like I haven't really gone there yet. Unfortunately, I don't have much information about this district written in my notebook.

In the south district is the dormitory where students at Hope's Peak Academy live. Apart from the dormitory, there is also a book store and convenience store but mainly there is a large shopping centre where many students can shop. Incidentally, it looks like only regular students can live in the dormitories. Also, the dormitories are supplied to the students as a bonus and it is not required that they pay to live in them.

Finally, there's the north district. though it seems to be more or less vacant now. Up until recently it was used as the old school building but since it is now neglected and unmaintained it is off limits for anyone to enter. So, there's no real need for me to go into detail over this section.

Then, in the middle of those four districts is another area. Hope's Peak Academy's "Central Plaza", it's spacious but also filled with large, overgrown trees. This is where students would usually go to relax, although it's off limits from 10 at night until 7 in the morning. Well, it's not like I'd just casually walk here in the middle of the night anyway.

Now then, I was able to make sense of the map, despite my messy handwriting and thus I managed to return to my dormitory safely. Inside the dormitory I ignored all the students who bothered to greet me, and I headed straight to my room. Inside my room there were stickers everywhere which said "This is my room". Looks like I'm in the right place. Even after confirming it as my room, I still stood my ground and daydreamed for a while. I couldn't think of what I wanted to do, so I just lazily lied on my bed. But since I had already napped somewhere else, I wasn't sleepy enough to fall asleep again.

So, reluctantly I decided I'd kill some time. But, even after deciding that I couldn't actually think of how to kill that time... not a single way!

I took out "Otonashi Ryouko's Memory Notebook" and flipped through it as I was lying down. In this notebook I had written down all my memories, even though I don't remember them. That is to say, I knew everything written in there was true, and non-fiction. It was exciting to read about my adventures, for a person as forgetful as myself, it was great entertainment.

Conversations I had with Matsuda-kun, things Matsuda-kun would say. In truth, my notebook is filled with things about Matsuda-kun. But, that's because it's fun. As I flipped through that notebook, my hand suddenly stopped on one page in particular. That page was filled with a young man's face.

My heart leapt. Well, it only leapt slightly I guess.

Perhaps, this was a portrait of Matsuda-kun. Since my heart only leapt a tiny bit, I suppose this picture didn't measure up to the real Matsuda-kun. Hmm, maybe it'd look better if I redrew it a little.

"... Hmmm, I wonder if the nose is different... No, it's the eyes.... " I couldn't clearly remember what Matsuda-kun looked like. I used the amount my heart beat as a clue to whether I got it closer to what he looked like or not. I carefully changed the portrait. I wonder if this is how bomb disposal units feel like when looking for landmines. No, they probably feel a little different.

After a while of changing the portrait, my heart beat a little faster than it did before. "There.... " I bet I was grinning without even realising. If I keep changing it a little every so often, I'm sure someday this picture will look just like Matsuda-kun. I'm sure I've

probably been drawing this picture for a while, but of course, I don't remember if I have. But drawing it took more concentration than I realized and I didn't continue for very long.

I was starting to feel tired, so I put my notebook next to my bed and lied down on my back and I mumbled something...

I want to meet Matsuda-kun, I want to meet Matsuda-kun, I want to meet Matsuda-kun.

That was all I could do. It filled up my mind and I kept saying *I want to meet Matsuda-kun*.

For me there was nothing else,

Nothing else I could remember,

and nothing else I needed to do.

Because for me I had no class mates or even family. I didn't know about them at all, so I didn't think about them. For me, people living in the outside world, they were a boring stage play that I watched together with the audience. To begin with I don't remember any events that happen in real life, it doesn't even feel like I live in the same space as anyone else.

Looking at class scenes from the hallway, people sweating in the gym, returning from club meetings, people sitting on the ground, talking about silly things or having an awkward conversation with their family. I see those things and can't help but feel envious. In the end, all those things really have nothing to do with me. But, in this world that is so cut off from me, I at least have one person that keeps me connected. That's Matsuda-kun.

That's why I keep thinking about him so much. I just stopped thinking about those other things.

I want to meet Matsuda-kun, I want to meet Matsuda-kun, I want to meet Ma-

Kathunk

I heard a strange noise from somewhere.

I got up from my bed and saw a letter had fallen onto the ground in front of my door.

"It's from Matsuda-kun!"

That was, not surprisingly, the conclusion I reached, I quickly hurled myself to where it laid and read it.

*Dear Super High School Level Idiotic Forgetful girl,
I'm the one who took all your precious "past memories" that you so carefully wrote down. They're filled to the brim with "memories" of that Matsuda Yasuke. The past carries a lot of weight, doesn't it? Doesn't it? Am I right? It does, if you think I'm lying then go ahead and look under your bed. That's where you were keeping all your "memories", but they're not there anymore. That's because I took them. If you want them back, could you come to the fountain in the central plaza at 1 tonight? I expect you to come by yourself. Though, I don't think you have anyone you can ask to come with you anyway.
That's all. I hope to see you tonight!*

As I read that, I went stiff. I was shaking like I was jelly. That metaphor might not have been appropriate, but even still I was completely baffled.

Blackmail?

What is this?

I can't make sense of it...

But, this wasn't something I could figure out just by asking questions. Firstly, if I looked under the bed... I looked and there was nothing. To be honest, even if I had ever put an old notebook under there, I still wouldn't have remembered it. But if I really had filled my old notebook with Matsuda-kun then it was bad that it had been stolen. The memories in that note book, would have all been things I had written myself.

This is it?

Over 10 years on this earth I only have these few memories to show for it?

Soon I was overcome with a sense of unfamiliarity. Or maybe, a sense of loss? A decade of memories that I was unable to reach. I'm sure people who have grown used to small wounds still have to live through at least a little pain each day, but it wasn't the same for me. How will I ever grow used to such pain? I don't even know.

In any case, for now I was just angry.

"Who would even.... This has gotta be a prank.... " My strained voice was trembling as I grasped the now crumpled letter in my hand.

"What... What the hell... "

Maybe I should run away... But, what if this was some sort of plan in order to interfere with the budding romance between Matsuda-kun and I? It's probably because Matsuda-kun looks so cool, some other girl must have seen us together. They saw us harbouring the start of a romance, yes, that must be the reason, so they took things into their own hands. She took my memories hostage with the intention to stop me... AH, WHAT A COWARD! With that, my anger exploded bigger than Mount Etna's big explosion... not really.

"Hamm.... "

I guess I've forgotten how to express anger too. But even for me, who's lost touch with the world, there's no way I can't be angry... I just don't know how to handle it. Though this may be my limit for imaginary anger. In any case, even if I could not get rid of my anger, it quickly subsided.

"Well, I guess I don't have any choice but to go."

After I had completely calmed down, I lied on the bed. I waited until it was 1 at night. So as not to forget about it, I continued to read the letter until the appointed time.

"... But, I'm not going to fight them. It's fine..." I left my room, feeling depressed. I went down the corridor in the dimly lit dormitory, and went outside. The cold, wet wind gently caressed my skin.

"Um, it was the Central Plaza... wasn't it?"

While checking the school map in "Otonashi Ryouko's Memory Notebook" I walked through the night with heavy feet.

This is the world of night. A world where everyone is asleep. In the middle of it, I was the only one walking. There weren't any signs of anyone anywhere. It was a definite atmosphere of loneliness... I didn't want to think any more about it.

Honestly, there were many times when I thought about going back to the dormitory. But, if I did, I had a bad feeling I would never see those memories again and so I reluctantly continued trudging forward. I kept going until I saw a large iron fence not too far away. It was shut and blocked off the entire pathway. My notebook said the Central Plaza was blocked between 10 at night and 7 in the morning, that's probably what the fence was for.

To put it simply, if I can't get past this fence, I won't be able to get to my destination. This time I really did consider going back, it was a hard decision, but I ended up climbing the fence. Somehow I made it to the other side and headed for my destination, I walked through the Central Plaza.

The darkness grew. It might have been because there were more trees around me. In the sunlight, the trees probably would have shined a bright green. Now the night stars were blocked out by the branches.

I continued through the darkness and suddenly my field of view opened substantially. I came across a small plaza, in the middle were relatively bright outdoor lights and next to those lights I spotted the fountain. The water poured out of the fountain making a light, trickling sound.

That's the place... As soon as I realized that, the tension in the air seemed to increase. I cautiously started to approach the fountain but after just a few steps I stopped.

I saw the silhouette of someone on the other side of the fountain. Due to the shade of the trees, I could only really see half of the figure but it was obvious to me that it was a body belonging to a man.

"Excuse me..." I tried to call out with a large voice but there was no response. ... Maybe if I got a little closer.

I stepped forward onto the lawn. Despite my attempts, the figure didn't seem to notice me at all. I continued to trudge closer and yelled out again.

"Excuse me... was it you who called me here?"

Still no reaction. There's no way they can't have heard me that time.

My body started to feel heavy, a large feeling of anxiety weighed down on my shoulders. Before I knew it, my clenched hands were covered in sweat. Still, my sense of curiosity got the better of me and drew me closer to the figure. The outline of the figure gradually became clearer and clearer to me.

I could see... he was wearing a suit. His hair was all grey and on his neck were countless, deep wrinkles.

There was a sudden gust of wind and he swayed.

To and fro.

Back and forth.

Fanned by the wind, the man continued swaying hopelessly. Then suddenly shivers ran down my spine. As if a cold hand brushed against the back of my neck. I heard my inner self tell me to stop but before I knew it my feet were moving by themselves. I looked at the man's face and I noticed something.

His eyes met mine.

I saw his wide, bloodshot eyes meet mine. His face was pale and covered in fading veins. He looked scary. His tongue lolled from his mouth down to his neck like a rotten sea cucumber.

And, he wasn't standing.

He was hanging by a rope around his neck. The wind continued to cause him to sway to and fro, back and forth. Just by looking at it I felt myself go cold. I know I should write this in my notebook but screw it I'm getting out of here! This has nothing to do with me!

Drip drip.

I heard a dripping sound coming from his feet. I looked down. Something was dripping from the tips of his feet into a puddle below him. For some reason, in the puddle was a notebook. As soon as I saw it, I felt a current run all the way through my body into my brain. There were some letters written on the cover, they were smudged, but there.

Written on it said "Otonashi Ryouko's Memory Notebook".

CHAPTER 6

I realized after a while I was running, with tears and snot all over my face and I was writing something down in my notebook.

But, I couldn't remember why I was running anymore. I started to slow down and read what I had written in my notebook. The memory I forgot just a moment ago instantly came back to me.

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!" While I was screaming I ran through the Central Plaza at full speed. After blindly climbing over the iron fence, I ran along the pavement until I saw the dormitory ahead of me. I ran into the dormitory as quickly as I could, looking for Matsuda-kun's room. At a time like this the only one I can think of, the only one I can rely on is him!

As I ran down the dormitory corridor I flipped through my notebook, looking for where Matsuda-kun's room is. I remembered something.

"Unless you have a good reason, you can't visit Matsuda-kun's room at all."

But, if this isn't a good reason then I don't know what is, so I ignored that warning. I flicked further through the pages, I finally remembered where Matsuda-kun's room was and arrived at it.

BANG BANG BANG BANG BANG

I violently banged on his door and screamed with all my strength.

"M-MATSUDA-KUN! I-I-IT'S AN EMERGENCY, AN EMERGENCY!!"

No matter how long I waited at his door, it didn't open.

"M-MATSUDA-KUN! OY, MATSUDA-KUN!"

Even so I continued to bash my hands on his door. Desperately, I still hit the door. As I lost hope that he would appear, I still hit my hands on the door. Hitting, banging, I still bashed on the door.

".. Who is it already?"

A door opened, but it was to the room next door.

... Huh?

Strangely enough, there was no one there. The door had opened, and I heard a voice but I couldn't see anyone.

"So, what happened? What's with the racket?" The voice echoed through the hallway, it was the voice of a child. I looked around once, but just as I thought there was no one there.

"... Big Sis, where are you looking? I'm over here."

"W-Where are you?" I screamed at the seemingly empty hallway. "S-Show yourself!" With that I heard the voice again.

"Ahaha, I'm not hiding. I'm right in front of you. You just haven't realized it yet, Big Sis."

Right in front of me?

To help calm myself, I took in a deep breath, slowed my harsh breathing and focused my mind.

That's when I realized.

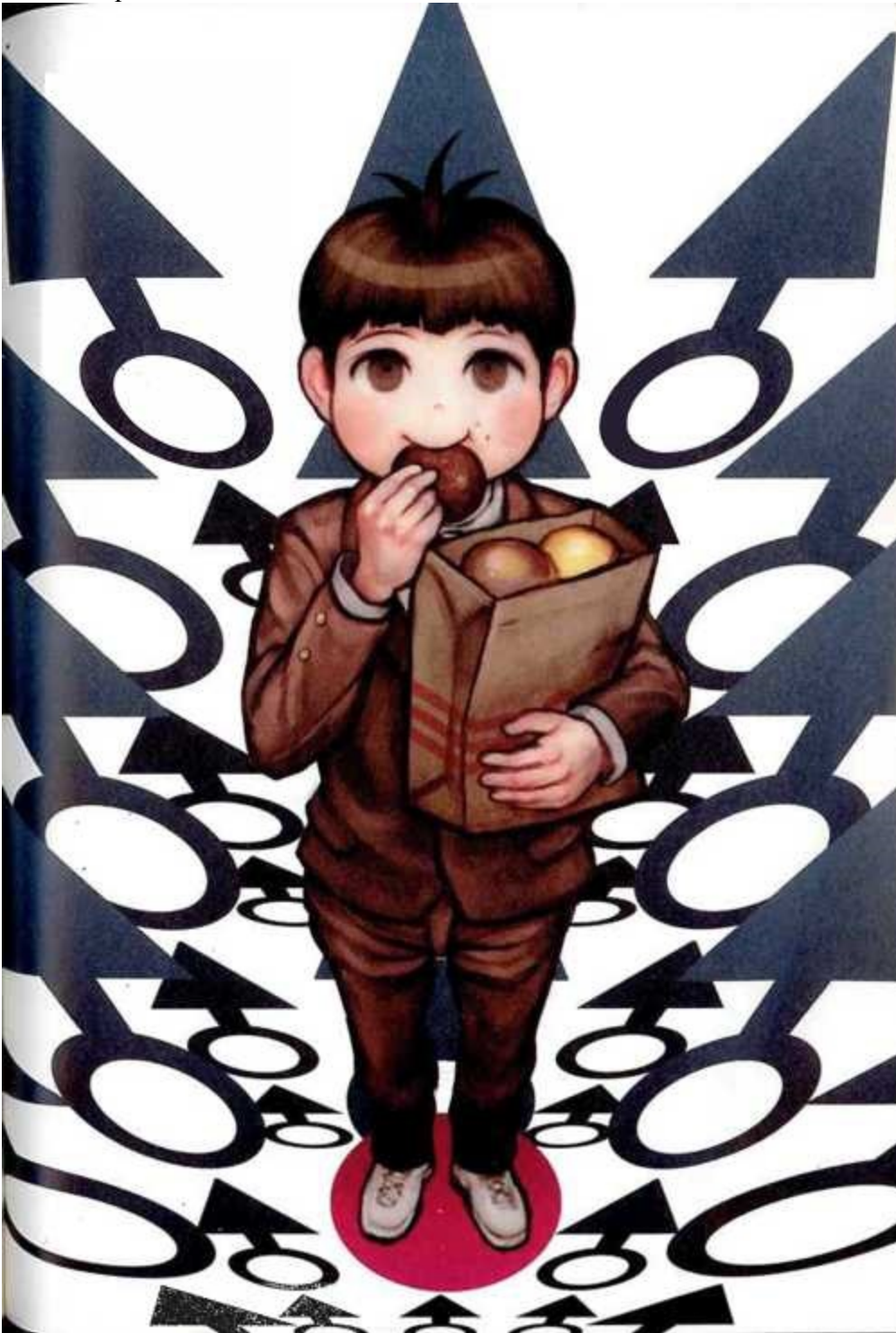
“Oh, have you finally noticed me?”

Right in front of my eyes stood a small, young boy who looked strangely like a Zashiki Warashi. ([wiki](#))

“... Ah, don't feel bad about not seeing me. You see, my presence has always been barely noticeable ever since I was born. Nearly everyone I meet doesn't notice me. It doesn't bother me though, I'm used to it.”

He had the face of a young boy and the voice of someone who had not reached puberty. He lacked any distinctive features surprisingly enough. For instance, if you were told to draw a child's face without looking at a picture for reference, you would end up drawing this one. It was identifiable in one aspect at least, due to the lack of features he certainly

had a unique face.



“So, what’s wrong?”

“.... Eh? What do you mean what’s wrong?”

“Oy, oy, I mean you came hear banging on the door screaming bloody murder at an hour when even insomniacs would be asleep and you don’t even know what’s wrong!

In his hands he held a huge bag filled to the brim with sweet bread that would be suitable for the appetite of people in a growth spurt. On the front of the paper bag, it looked like the logo for “Handel & Gretel”. He picked a sweet bread out of the bag and tossed it in his mouth.

“Fhwo, Fwa Fwahlen?”

“..... Eh? What did you say?”

The young boy chewed and swallowed the bread, “I said what happened? Tell me. My talents are pretty useful.”

As he urged me on, he looked at me. Paying special attention to my chest and legs.

“Um, before we get to that I’d like to ask something... Why’s there a kid here? Does your big brother or big sister go to this scho-”

“I’m Kamishiro Yuuto from Hope’s Peak Academy’s 77th bach. Nice to meet you.”

“..... Huh?”

“I’m a high school student”

... What?

“Of course, my hair down low has already grown.”

... Oh my!

“Don’t act so surprised, anyway I’ve introduced myself so why not tell me your name!”

“R-Right, um...” With that I held up my notebook in front of his face.

“Ah ha! Well that’s one way to introduce yourself.” He replied from the other side of my notebook. “Hmmm, Otonashi Ryouko, is it? Hm, it’s not a bad name. My patience leveled up waiting for you just to introduce yourself though.”

He had an innocent laugh, just like a primary school student.

“Well then,” His face suddenly became very serious. “What kind of trouble?” His eyes sparkled with curiosity... or rather, they glared with curiosity. Actually, it wasn’t curiosity, they were more greedy, more calculating, more fanatical.

“It’s just you seemed to be in a huge rush, so I can only assume you saw something pretty bad.”

He stared me in the eye with an aura that seemed to clash with his young appearance. He thrust his hand into the paper bag, and took out a sweet bread, like it was the lottery.

“Oh, sweet! Ebisu Pumpkin Melon Bread!” At that moment he put on an innocent smile and stuffed the bread into his mouth happily.

“So what is it? This trouble?”

“Um... it’s not really trouble or anything... It’s just I needed to get into Matsuda-kun’s room...”

“Fhafufhwaf fwhou.”

“Sorry, I didn’t quite catch that....”

Kamishiro-kun swallowed the bread and said “Matsuda Yasuke is out.”

“... Out?”

“Yup, out!”

“EEH!” I yelled out without meaning to and my voice echoed through the dormitory. “N-No way! He can’t, he can’t! He sure as hell picked a great time to disappear!”

“You say that, but it might have been unavoidable.” Kamishiro-kun continued to nibble his bread, despite my obvious distraught emotional state. “I mean, his edginess is kinda well know among the 77th batch. After banging against his door so loudly I’m pretty sure he would have noticed by now. I’m in the next room and even I noticed and came out to investigate.”

“But if he’s not here... then where is Matsuda-kun?”

“Maybe he’s pulling an all-nighter at his lab? He does spend entire nights there pretty often.”

“Got it! His lab!” I turned away from him and began to run.

“Ah, wait!” Kamishiro-kun stopped me. “You can’t be going there now, can you? Did you forget? I think there’s a crime prevention sensor on the iron fence in the east district.”

“... Eh? I can’t go?” So then I can’t rely on Matsuda-kun for this. “You got to... be kidding...” I searched through my brain thoroughly. “Oh no.... What should I do? This is the biggest crisis I’ve ever faced...”

“So, why not tell me!” Kamishiro-kun looked towards me with a calm expression. “It’s a shame to see Big Sis’ cute face having such a troubled expression, I can’t just leave. What’s the situation? I’ll listen to you.”

What kind of trouble?! Well, you know just...

“... huh?”

Just...

“Um... what was it again?” Apparently my head doesn’t know. Looks like I forgot again.

“Um, wait half a moment...” I quickly checked my notes.

“Ahaha, I said you don’t have to hide it. Well, if it wasn’t that serious then you really shouldn’t have knocked on his door like that. At this time of night, it’s almost as if you found a dead body from Kindaichi Case Files!” ([wiki](#))

A dead body... As soon as Kamishiro-kun said that I found the words in my notebook. At that moment I was attacked by a sudden realization and I stopped breathing.

“Hey... what’s wrong..... oy, you look like you just saw a ghost, Big Sis!”

I found the memories that said I found a dead body. I couldn’t breathe. I tried telling myself the breathe over and over again.

This has nothing to do with me.

Just keep repeating that.

“Nothing to do with me... nothing to do with me... nothing to do with me...” For me it was like repeating a magical enchantment. Every time I said that the world quickly shrunk down... it was a magical enchantment.

“That’s right... Nothing to do with me... Nothing to do with me, right...” By repeating that to myself I was finally able to calm myself down and close the notebook properly-I read my memory once more carelessly.

Otonashi Ryouko’s Memory Notebook at the feet of the dead body.

At that moment I screamed louder than I ever had before.

“AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH! I
FORGOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOT!”

My notebook had been dropped in a puddle. No matter how many times I could argue that it had nothing to do with me, I couldn’t deny the fact my name was there at the scene of the crime. This is no different to being an extra being pulled into centre stage in front of a faceless audience and given harsh treatment!

This is bad. My heart was pounding violently!

“W-W-W-W-What’ll I do... W-W-What’ll I do....” It was breaking. The world beneath my feet was crumbling apart. Before it fell apart completely though, I needed to get that notebook!

Driven by my frustrations at maximum level, I sped off at full speed.

“B-Big Sis! Wait a second!” A voice called from behind me. “If you’d just tell me what the situation is-”

“Well then, if you could, tell Matsuda-kun when he comes back that I was looking for him. BYE!” I yelled back loudly without even looking and ran through the corridor.

I left the dormitory and dashed along the sidewalk in the south district. I climbed over the fence with my momentum from running. I ran as quickly as I could through the pitch black darkness to the Central Plaza. Even after I had run out of breath I didn’t notice and continued running at full speed, I barely made it to the fountain.

But...

“... Wha...?”

I felt a strange sense of discomfort.

I strained my eyes to see over and over again and... yeah, there’s something strange here. I usually trust other people more than I trust my own head, if I come across some strange circumstances, I would doubt my own brain-

I discovered the dead body of an old man at the fountain in the Central Plaza.

Well at least my memories seem to back up my conviction. The reason behind my feeling of discomfort was caused by the scene in front of me.

There's no dead body. That's the reason.

It was strange that there was a dead body, but now that there's no dead body it's only stranger.

Stranger and stranger... the epitome of strangeness.

Perhaps they're actually alive?

Or maybe they're undead?

I didn't know what the reason was, unconsciously I looked around me. At the base of one of the nearby trees, I saw something. It was the notebook. The one with "Otonashi Ryouko's Memory Notebook" written on it.

But, what's this? Why would my notebook be here? As I was questioning it I walked to where the notebook was.

"Ta dadadada ta da~!"

I flinched and started trembling as I looked behind me. There was a girl standing right behind me.

"Ha! Ha! Ha! So you finally decided to show up!" She was in a daunting pose, with her arms folded over her chest, she looked to be around the same age as me.

She had flashy make up on that seemed to have come straight out of a fashion magazine. She had a soft, sizable blonde hair. Her chest bulged out of her uniform which was stupidly partially unbuttoned. Under her short skirt were a pair long, thin, white legs.

At first glance she looked like a normal, cute girl. But those eyes, those eyes seemed anything but ordinary. Her eyes were black, bottomless swamps, they were so dark they seemed to imprison any surrounding darkness... Such strange eyes.

As soon as I saw her eyes, the warning lights in my head flashed code red. Run away, every cell in my anatomy was screaming at me to run. But at the same time, it felt like any resistance I put up was futile. I was a prisoner in her jail. But, I couldn't stay still.

“... Hey, hey? Why are you ignoring me? Are you a mute character by default?” The girl was smiling but it was a smile that absolute power gave to the weak, it was a smile of pure evil.

“Ah! I get it!” She suddenly raised her voice, she lifted her hand and pointed her index finger at my forehead. “What you were just thinking about. You were looking at where my arms were folded, weren’t you? ‘Come to think of it, I never cross my arms across my chest anymore. But that’s because some girl’s breasts are too large to fold their arms over, riiiiight...’. How rude! A woman who takes pride in her chest size is awful! You should trust in the world’s boobs! Don’t you know that all those bad things are born from the shitty fantasy world of variety shows, anime and games? Ah, GROSS! It’s seriously gross! But you know, have more faith in the now! Just because out in rural areas you might have been considered hot property, when you come out to the city you don’t compare to anyone but you still want to be noticed so you stupidly take off your clothes for anyone when in reality they can see she’s just a girl with an empty head and a hot piece of ass who they can easily take the virginity from!! Changing the subject, virgins are the worst, aren’t they? Even more so the fact that the characters for virgin(童貞) and the characters for Dong Zhuo’s name(董卓) are so similar! But even so after all that, Lü Bu was still the one to murder him. Though I guess in the end Dong Zhuo is still trillions of times better than a virgin! And, what was I talking about? ... Aaah, right, right (she says sou sou in japanese) ... The story of Cao Cao (Cao Cao is pronounced Sou Sou in Japanese)? In retrospect, Cao Cao joining the coalition against Dong Zhuo is at least a litt-”

“Hey, can you slow do-Ow!” Obviously offended that I tried to cut off her rant, she pressed her index finger into my forehead making me stop.

“Ah, I remembered this time! We were talking about how you should have more faith in boobs! You know, if you have any bad things to say about faith in boobs, then you should just drop it right now. Or you should just pronuncio in Italiano! If you don’t then it’ll be difficult for you when you get older! Understand? They’ll end up drooping all over the shop! Or will you be one of those people? Who end up winning against the effects of gravity! Have you somehow acquired the skills to defeat gravity? What a surprise! So then is Magneto going to come scout you out? Well, so I say, but is it possible he’s already foun-”

“Please, stop for a- fugha” I tried stopping her by being more insistent but she shoved her fingers into my mouth.

“Shut down.... wait, that’s not it. What is it you say when you want someone to stop talking? Well, whatever. In any case, stop talking. Stop interrupting me. I love talking,

you know! Silent-chan should keep her mouth shut like a good silent-chan. Since it's my turn right now after all..."

"Fhuga... Hafwhefa..."

"Ah ha! I don't understand a thing you're saying~!" Saliva flowed out of my mouth onto her fingers and into a thin thread towards the ground, though the girl didn't seem to notice at all.

"In any case, what's your name, Silent-chan?"

"Fhughahohe... Fhuga..."

"Oy, oy," She made a grumpy face, "Don't say fugafuga... just say your name. If you don't say it in three seconds or less then I'll follow the three second rule and rip your tongue out."

As she finished saying that she grasped my tongue in her fingers. She dug her fingers in and used them as a vise for my tongue.

"Okaaaaaaaay! One..." She started the countdown. Huh? It's not a joke? My body was covered in a cold sweat.

Wait a second, I can't talk if she's holding my tongue!

"Twooo..." I realized I was still holding my notebook in my hand. Quickly I threw it in front of her eyes.

"Hmm. Otonashi Ryouko is it... But that's too bad!" Like she was a demon from hell she spread her mouth into a smile and laughed. "I told you to SAY your name didn't I? Not show me your name!"

"... Fhwa?"

"Well then, it's been three seconds, I'm taking your tongue
noooooooooooooooooooooooooow!"

"Ha,
HagaaAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAfuguUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUAAAAA"
With everything I could muster I tried desperately to resist. Her nails cut into my tongue cruelly. The taste of iron and blood mixed in my saliva throughout my mouth, as I tasted it my will to fight rapidly disappeared. She stared at me blankly, her eyes filled with the dark colour of despair as they absorbed any hope I had. She reminded me that it was

useless to resist. All my energy seemed to disappear and my notebook slipped out of my hand. I gave up on everything and let my body relax.

CHAPTER 6 (Part 2)

“..... Uhu” I heard a laughing voice.

“Uhu.... Aha... Ahahahaha!” She was laughing bizarrely with an ecstatic expression and flushed cheeks.

"AAAAAAAAAAAAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA
HA!" She ruthlessly, barbarically laughed. When she finished laughing she finally pulled her fingers out of my mouth.

“Cough cough cough” As soon as she did I was coughing like a crazy person. Blood mixed with saliva dripped out of my mouth.

“Aha, I was joking. It was all a big joke! There’s no reason on why I’d want your tongue! Did you come from the middle ages or something?”

“Cough, cough, cough cough cough”

“Hey, are you wondering why I’d do something like that? I’ll tell you why, I want to see that face of yours filled with despair. You see, for me that’s the best kind of self introduction”

She bent over towards me while I was still coughing and wiped the saliva from her hands onto my back. Then she said in a very serious tone of voice,

“Anyway, I still haven’t introduced myself, have I?”

I stood up properly, surprised. I was overcome by a bad feeling, like something really awful was about to happen.

I wanted no involvement with this girl, my intuition rejected her. But, she didn't stop. She continued proudly and announced her name.

“My name is Tenkuujoura Byuta!”

“Tenkuujou... ra Byu...”

“Not really! It was a joke, a joke!”

A joke... has she no concept of timing?

“Ah, you were thinking “Has she no concept of timing”, right?”

Furthermore, she is excellent at guessing.

“But, jokes are just great, don’t you think? Hey, wasn’t it Hirobumi Itou who said, ‘Jokes and humour exist so mankind can live without going mad’? Hmmm, that was a lie. Hirobumi-chan never said any such thing!” ([Hirobumi Itou](#))

I didn’t know how to reply. In any case, the girl finally replied.

It really took her a while.

“My name is Enoshima Junko. I go by “Super High School Level Fashion Girl”. Sometimes I’m a charismatic model with an adoring audience. Sometimes I’m a charismatic... I can’t tell you yet! Forgive me!”

She announced herself and the light from the outdoor lights shone on her back, as if she were an actor in the spotlight on stage.

Enoshima Junko.

I couldn’t read this girl’s thoughts at all, but I knew I shouldn’t associate with her. My body began moving by itself. Incidentally, I noticed I had picked up my notebook and was writing her name in it.

“... Oyoyo, what are you doing?” Enoshima-san looked at me quickly with a curious face.

“Ah, um... this is...” Without being able to think of a good answer, I hesitated to reply.

“Argh! Don’t tell me it’s a secret! You’re going into your silent-chan mode again!” She puffed out her cheeks like she was a little kid, and made a frustrated expression. From one moment to the next, her expression changed in a heartbeat. I admit I was a little impressed.

“You know, the whole Silent-chan character isn’t really in style today, huh? Since human beings have such excellent conversational skills, you shouldn’t exploit it anymore. It’s Reece Witherspoon. No wait, that’s not it... It’s really wasteful!

“But, this conversation is going no where, all you ever say is too cryptic for-”

“Stop saying you. I introduced myself earlier didn’t I?” Her tone was threatening.

“Um... Enoshima-san, I haven't been able to understand anything you said for a while, it's been too c-”

“Drop the san. I hate to be referred to with such formalities!”

“But we only met a few minutes ago, I really shouldn't be rude...”

“We're not complete strangers or anything. Ahaha, that's wrong! I mean, you and I are penpaaaaaaaaals!”

“... Penpals?”

“You know, you read my letter, didn't you? You came here because you read it, didn't you?”

Letter? What letter? I checked through my notebook quickly and was soon reminded. As I remembered I raised my voice in surprise.

“Eh? So then you?!”

“That's right, I'm the one who took your memory hostage, I'm the secret identity of that beautiful kidnapper!”

“B-But, why-”

“Hey! Don't rely on me, think for yourself for once!”

“Um... So you really wanted Matsuda-kun and I to-”

“That's absolutely wrong!”

I tried my best to answer well, but I was just dismissed instantly by her with a threatening attitude.

“Well, either way, I can't really tell you much!” As she said that, Enoshima-san took the notebook that had been placed under the tree and stuffed it away in her cleavage without paying any mind to the wet cover.

“Ufufu, it's too bad but I'm keeping this notebook for a while longer. I can't let you take it from the crime sce-oh my, oh my oh my oh my oh my.” Enoshima-san's eyes suddenly widened.

“Oh my my my my my?” She said turning around, while looking everywhere. She yelled out like a madman.

“It’s gone! It’s gone! It’s gone! It’s gone! It’s gone! It’s gone! It’s gone!” I was taken aback by her sudden change and timidly asked her.

“W-What’s... gone?”

“It’s gone! It’s gone! Isn’t it weird? There’s nothing here! There’s nothing here!” She ran around the perimeter of the tree saying the same thing over and over again like a broken record, though I did not understand why.

“So, tell me what’s gone!” I pressed more with a stronger tone of voice.

“Hm? Ahh...” Finally she looked at me. In contrast to what I expected her expression to look like, her face was completely expressionless. She continued looking at me with a vacant face and spoke in a terribly monotone voice, in a light tone, as if she was talking about something like a dropped coin.

“The dead body, the body that was dead. There was a post-death body here before!”

“Huh?”

“Ah, you forgot that too? Seriously, you really are forgetful. I mean, you saw the dead body too, didn’t you?” As she said that another question came to my mind.

“... Huh? How’d you know I’m forgetful? Did I tell you?”

“T-That doesn’t matter. There’s not mistake, I know there was definitely a corpse here before!” Enoshima-san’s voice rose. She brushed aside my question. “You’ve gotta believe me! There was a dead body here earlier! I know there was because I killed him myself!”

“... Huh?” I went stiff suddenly.

“I mean, I came up from behind him and hung him, with my own two hands. You know, he wet his pants a little! Old men like him really should always have diapers at the ready. If they did it really would give a person a better sense of relief!”

“Huh?” I stood still, as if someone had cast confuse on me. In short, despite my confused state Enoshima-san continued to talk with exaggerated gestures.

“Teehee, I’m a little hesitant to say, but some of it got on my clothing. So I went to the bathroom to wash myself but, while I was gone... the dead body seems to have slipped away. It totally disappeared. My bad, he really surprised me with that piss. So you know, that notebook I picked up just now was covered in piss.”

“Huh?”

“To be honest with you, I had him there only as a sort of example for others... Seriously, who did that...”

“Huh?”

“Honestly, are you going on with that again? Shouldn’t you get with the times already and bring out your inner energetic character?”

“Huh?”

“What an idiot!”

It was useless. In my head I couldn’t make sense of her words, spinning round and round in my thoughts. As they grinded against my brain, I was struck by an awful headache. I really just don’t get her at all. Anyway, she said she had just killed someone didn’t she? Why would she say that to someone she only just met?

“Ah, you’re wondering why I’d tell all this to you, aren’t you?” Once again, she guessed correctly. “I’ve decided! You’re going to help me!”

“.... Eh?” I was in a daze, but I had a tremendous amount of anxiety building inside of me and it spread out to my whole body. “M-Me help you? W-Wait a second! I-I can’t get involved in something like that!”

“Huh?”

“I said... I can’t get involved in something like that!”

“Huh?”

“I s-said-”

“Stop stressing so much! You’re starting to turn too much into an energetic character!”

“It’s not that, I-”

“You misunderstood me. I mean, for example, when you eat cup ramen, you have to wait three minutes after putting in the hot water. While waiting you ask out loud ‘Why three minutes?’ and listen for an answer. But no one ever answers, do they?”

My thoughts were filled with an overwhelming, chaotic mess.

“W-What are you talking about? That has nothing to do w-”

“It has everything to do with it! It’s the same thing!” Enoshima-san retorted with a strong tone. “I’ve decided, you’re going to do what I tell you to! I don’t have to explain any more! Ah, I’m not boasting or anything but I get too impatient and always give up before it’s been three minutes! People always think I prefer harder noodles but the reason isn’t anywhere near that confusing! Hey, you get me, don’t you?”

Any cognition I may have had disintegrated with a rattling sound, my brain had collapsed into a mound of rubble, all that remained was an astoundingly large question mark.

I don’t understand her at all.

That was the one and only thing I knew for absolute sure.

It’s impossible to understand others perfectly, it’s easier to perform the superhuman act of making it to the Olympics. That would be a truly incredible feat. Still, I knew from the very start that I shouldn’t get involved with her. But hey, at least it’s still not too late to get away from her.

That’s right, I should run away!

Finally, it came down to such a simple answer. Immediately I backed away from her, I kicked the ground and ran the other way.

Only to run into Enoshima-san head on.

“What the?!” I fell on my bum. My whole body went numb and my backside hurt, I looked up at her. Before I knew it, Enoshima-san was blocking my route. How was she able to move there so quickly? It was as if she had moved before I had even turned and managed to walk around me so she was behind me in a split second.

“T-Teleportation?!”

“I prefer Shukuchi. That’s what they use in light novels, I like that more.” ([Shukuchi](#))

My whole body felt beaten and bruised. It seems like no matter what I do, I won't be able to escape from this girl. I could say this has nothing to do with me as many times as I wanted... but this girl won't let me have nothing to do with it.

"Hey, maybe you misunderstood me?" She crouched down and looked at me properly.

I couldn't look away from her eyes. Warning bells rung in my head again. I couldn't look away.

"I told you, it doesn't matter if you want to or not, it all depends on what Enoshima Junko decides. That's why, the very idea of even running away from Enoshima Junko is just idiotic. Since everything in this world belongs perfectly to Enoshima Junko. This man, that girl, anyone and everyone on this planet were just born and given accommodation on Enoshima Junko's world. To be brief, "What yours is mine" and "You are mine"... This whole planet is just a plaything for Enoshima Junko."

What? This girl is so self centered and evil it's nauseating. I could only hope this girl wasn't serious and silently curse my own lack of luck for running into her.

"Well, whatever's fine. But, getting back on topic, the dead body." She seemed to be changing the discussion. She shifted her weight onto her other leg and directed a question at me. "Hey, do you know Hope's Peak Academy's Steering Committee?"

"Hope's Peak Academy's Steering Committee?" I checked through my notebook but I couldn't find those words anywhere. It seems like I know nothing about them. But, why would she suddenly say that name all of a s-

"Smells like you haven't... Oh, wrong sense, sorry! Do over. Looks like you haven't!" Enoshima Junko spread out her hands in an exaggerated manner, just like a show presenter. "Bing Biiing! That's right, the corpse that should have been here, that was a member of Hope's Peak Academy's Steering Committee! Those guys have more power than the teaching staff and the headmaster, that means they're practically in charge of the whole place. Ufufu, doesn't hearing that sort of thing make you all excited?"

No, this girl was the only one getting excited.

"But, you don't have to worry. I mean, I decided to kill him here. That's right, I had decided everything from the very beginning. In the end, it's pointless no matter how much those guys try to hide "that incident"."

"... That incident?" I unintentionally paid attention to her again. It was just an instant reaction I had without really meaning to react. It was something I blurted out in the spur of the moment without thinking about it.

“Oh my, oh my, oh my, you’re interested after all? You’re interested about that? After hearing a thing like “that incident” in quotation marks so many times, you can’t help but feel curious, right?” Enoshima-san then placed her hands on her hips, put on a proud pose and declared loudly, “I’m talking about “The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope’s Peak Academy’s History”! That’s what I mean by “that incident”!”

As soon as I heard her words in the inside of my head I felt a weird heat. What is this? A hot tingling sensation paralyzed my consciousness. At the same time, as if I were manipulated by a puppetmaster I started to write down words in my notebook.

The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope’s Peak Academy’s History.

“You’d be really good as a part time worker. Since you always have to write down everything the manager tells you on the first day in a memo book. But if I ever had to listen to a manager’s constant talking, I’d send them to hell. I’m not even kidding, I’d take them straight to hell. First, I’d attack their family, then I’d attack all their friends and acquaintances so they can get a small tasting of despair. Then, finally when they’re begging for me to kill them, I’ll make them suffer even more... Anyway, who are you?”

“Eh?” I looked up from my notebook in surprise. The girl had a perfect glare on. It could slice down anything in it’s path. But she wasn’t looking at me, instead she was looking at something behind me. I looked back for a brief second. But, I just saw trees in the pitch black darkness of night.

“Hey, I asked you who you were, aren’t you listening?” Even so, Enoshima-san continued to question the darkness.

In the corner of my peripheral vision I think I saw something move. Just after that, something emerged, swaying from a gap in the densely packed trees.

“... Eh?”

A white mask against a jet black background appeared. It was a person’s face. It seemed almost like it was completely covered in white paint.

“Aah, you found me, huh?” Along with the voice, I could make out a silhouette of a person out of the darkness. I could see a pair of eyes that looked like they belonged to a snake. A long slender body dressed in a black school uniform. He had black hair that slid down to his shoulders, matching his clothing with black on black. From the clearing a white face with thin eyes, not unlike a reptile peaked out.

“My name is... Madarai Isshiki.” It was a man’s mouth, though it looked almost as if it did not move.

“I see. That’s nice and all but... what a silly name! Enoshima Junko is one thousand times cooler!” I could see Enoshima-san roaring back at him over my shoulder. Even in this situation this girl was smiling and looking unnerved.

“I can’t argue with that, but I do still have confidence in this name of mine. But speaking of which, you seem to have an upper hand in something else.”

“Huh, and what’s that?”

“If I could, I wanted to talk with you alone. Well, I suppose this is inevitable.” Muttering under his breath Madarai took something out of his pocket... What looks to be a photo. Like a reptile he restlessly moved his line of sight up and down. Looking between us and the photo he was holding.

“... I see now, so that’s Enoshima Junko.”

“So, you need Enoshima Junko for something?” She replied instantly.

“No, I just heard a rumour.”

“About how Enoshima Junko is a flawlessly perfect, beautiful woman with no equal?”

“Well, that’s certainly the case but no...” Madarai carefully separated his words and radically changed his tone of voice, “Is it not Enoshima Junko who is involved in “that incident”?”

“So you wanna hear what I know about it? Ha ha, no can do!” Even after that Enoshima-san was smiling as carefree as ever. That strong facade she had one showed no signs of breaking. “I wouldn’t bother talking about that to small fry like yourself. Learn your place!”

“.... I thought you’d say as much. Well, I didn’t expect you to tell me easily.”

“What are you gonna do about it? Don’t tell me, you’re gonna force it out of me? What are you? An old fashioned liberal? Such a stupid old fashioned tactic only works in V-Cinema films!” (Direct to video releases by Toei)

“I may be old fashioned but I should tell you, I’m not the type to go easy on women. I can only hope you’re not expecting me to act nice.” Madarai shot a stare right through us.

Madarai and Enoshima-san glared at each other. I seemed to be able to hear a rumbling sound. This really has nothing to do with me, right? This is a matter to be sorted out between a man named Madarai Isshiki and a woman named Enoshima Junko. So I really don't have anything to do with this, but if that's the case, why am I trembling in fear when I have no connection to this at all?

"Well then, are the two of you prepared? If you-"

"W-Wait a second!" I raised my voice in protest. Enoshima-san and Madarai both redirected their gazes to me. "Uh, erm... it's just, isn't it strange that you said two? I mean, what use would I be for-"

"I can't let one of you run away, now can I. You seem to be involved with Enoshima Junko, so there's a possibility that you may also be involved in that incident." Madarai said while licking his lips. "You have only yourself to blame for getting involved with Enoshima Junko. I've been hearing complaints about this girl for quite some time now. I was only prepared for one person, but now I have to deal with two? That's twice as much work. But still, since I was patient before, patience now comes to me."

"W-What... is that... ?" What a confusing theory... No, that's not a theory. It's just an overwhelmingly self centered ethic. Speaking of self centered though, it still doesn't compare to her's.

"Hmmm, I get it. You definitely have a can-do attitude. But you know... this girl here has a can-kill attitude!" While saying that, Enoshima-san patted my head as she smiled. Which girl was she talking about? "Hey, now's not the time to be absent minded, I'll see you later!"

Huh? See who when?

"Ah! I see the resemblance! Your imitation of bad fur seals has improved so much. But now's not the time for that, go ahead and fight him, quickly now. It's your job, isn't it?"

D-Did she say... fight him?

"W-W-What are you sayiiiiiiiiiiiiing?!" I screamed out and threw my hands in the air.

"It's fine. You're a can-be, can-do girl! That's right, a can-kill, can-die girl!"

"Oy, oy, don't speak with such twisted words... Saying things like 'can-kill, can-die', it's not really something high school girls should say." As I heard him say that, Madarai grimaced with a bitter smile.

“Oh my, oh my, you don’t like mutual killing?” Enoshima-san replied with a mocking tone of voice, “Whatever shall I do, I didn’t expect you to have such resolves. I’m a little disappointed.”

“... It’s only natural. I don’t have a reason to kill. After all, I’m still planning on hearing many stories. I’ll try to keep your mouths working at least.” Madarai squinted his snake-like eyes further. To emphasize his point, he repeated himself, “But only... your mouths.”

He stood tall and swayed like a flame on a candle, with each sway he inched closer.

“Hmmm, it’s seriously a can-do attitude.”

“It’s only natural. I’ve been waiting for this opportunity ever since that incident.” As Madasai said that, he gripped his hand to his chest and squeezed, though his hand seemed to contrast against his snake-like appearance. If I do hit him, his face would cave in just like a manga character’s!

“W-W-W-What should we do... W-W-What can I do...!” I looked back with my eyes filling with tears.

“I knew it, it really can’t be helped.” Enoshima-san looked stiff and replied in a quiet, deep voice. She then changed back to her normal, refreshing tone, “You’re up!”

“W-WAAAAAAIIIIIT!”

“Ahaha! Don’t worry, it’ll be fine!” She pulled me into a hug from behind. “Of course you’ll cooperate with me. Now you’ll be able to display your “ability” to your heart’s content!”

Huh? My ability? Did she say my ability?

“Hey, hey, when you’re in a pickle. shouldn’t you just look in your notebook?”

“Ah, right...”

As she said that, I looked back down at my notebook and as soon as I did that...

Whoosh!

Crack, bang!

Boom, thump, thud, bam bam bam bam!

Sounds that you would usually only hear in anime echoed around. I looked up out of reflex.

“... Eh?” Enoshima-san who was hugging my shoulders only a moment ago was now engaged in an intense battle with Madarai just a few metres in front of me.

Kapow, wham, bang bang bang bang!

Madarai attacked with his limbs as if they were whips. Against it, Enoshima-san didn't pull back an inch, despite her femininity... W-What was that move!

“Hey, you! You look like a pig, stop pacing-I mean spacing out!” Enoshima-san swung her leg around like she was an amazing gymnast and raised her voice. “Keep reading your notebook!”

As she swooped her leg around, Madarai dropped to the ground with a short groan. As he did that, he twisted around his slender body and with the momentum he returned a kick as if he were breakdancing.

“Whoops!” Enoshima-san dodged jumping in the air, Madarai took the opportunity to get back on his feet and immediately threw a right straight punch. It looked as though he was too far away to land a hit, but his arm ignored its length reached her. However, Enoshima-san managed to block it with her fist, reversed the action and kicked his abdomen with her right leg.

“Gwah...!” Madarai groaned out in response. The two finally stopped fighting.

“Oh, I win. That was a crescent kick. Ever since I saw it in a magazine I've been wanting to try it out.” The crouching Madarai didn't question her, Enoshima-san had a big cheesy grin on.

In any case, how did the school wrestling fight even begin? I've forgotten but there seems to be no context for-

“I told you, what are you doing, standing around like an idiot?” I was standing motionless, stunned, when Enoshima-san's frustrated voice interrupted my thoughts. “Hurry up and use your notebook to fill you in. I don't want to risk my life for noth-”

Her expression changed.

A high kick came at her from behind like a whip, Enoshima-san's thin body was mowed down like a piece of paper.

“Ah!” She raised her voice and jumped away before she could look around.

“... Phew, that was risky.” She got up from her kneeling position as if nothing happened. Speaking of risky, her left arm appeared to have a red mark on it. It seems like she must have used it in order to block Madarai’s kick. I thought it was strange that Enoshima’s thin arms weren’t broken at all by the force-No, it seem like I wasn’t the only one. Madarai was scowling at Enoshima-san, looking clearly frustrated.

“Ufu, scared since I’m so strong? Did you hold back? I’m the ultimate weapon fashion girl who is thus far unbeaten in three hundred fights! Bam!”

“Shut up.” He hatefully scoffed at her words. Madarai went for another strike at her. The intense battle resumed. They went at each other using their whole bodies, right hand, right foot, left hand, left foot, and alternated rapidly from offensive to defensive and back to offensive. While watching them I began writing things down in my notebook.

“COME OOOOOOOOOOON!” Enoshima-san had just returned a high roundhouse kick and Madarai’s grin strained. He avoided her high kick, crouched down and dived at her body. His long hands reached out to her, and tried to hug her waist.

But in that moment, Enoshima-san thrust her knee to his chin.

“... Guh!”

Madarai managed to swerve in mid-tackle and narrowly avoid Enoshima-san’s knee barely. But, he lost his balance and tried to land on the grass with his right hand. However, he landed with his entire right side body, with a “hiiiyah”, Enoshima-san delivered another roundhouse kick. Hastily, Madarai attempted to guard with his right hand, but was too late.

The intense kick hit Madarai’s right temple. With a dry sound, Madarai’s bent figure slid up the lawn.

“I win! I win! I butterfly samba’d to the zigzag samba!” Saying that, Enoshima-san laughed loudly. (I think this is a reference to the opening of Captain Tsubasa, Moete Hero)

“I have a habit of letting my blabbing mouth take charge. Well, you really should take some time to relearn the basics. You gotta crawl before you can walk!” Enoshima-san cackled. She took out a hand mirror from under her uniform and began to fix her hair. Despite having just been in a fight, she was breathing calmly like nothing had happened. I ran up to her and cheered happily.

“Y-You did it! Somehow you did it! I thought you were done for, for a while!” Enoshima-san’s expression completely 180’d.

“Huuh?” Her eyes filled with disgust, “... Were you even paying attention? Do you think it’s case closed? That’s an armageddon sized misunderstanding!”

“... Eh?”

I saw something get up in the corner of my eye. It was Madarai.

“H-How?”

“That kick shouldn’t have sent him back so far. He was using his own strength to be thrown back as well. So he could minimize his injuries. It was just because I was going easy on him to begin with.”

SCREEEEEEEEEEEECH

I could hear the grinding sound of scraping metal. Madarai was grinding his teeth enough to cause sparks.

“Oh, are you angry... ? Are you angry at someone... ?”

I directed my attention in front of me, at Madarai. An unsteady voice came from behind me, in Enoshima-san’s direction.

“It’s fine, there’s no way you can lose against that guy... probably.”

“At least try to sound more convinced!” I said, looking over everything I wrote down.

“Don’t look away.” Enoshima-san’s harsh voice lectured me, “Don’t look away from your prey. That’s one of the basics.”

“Huh, prey...” In contrary, I’d rather think it’s my side that’s the prey. While grinding his teeth, Madarai reached out to us and moved closer. He was giving off an aura of bloodthirst like a hungry viper, I felt like an intimidated rabbit, trembling.

In this kind of situation, Enoshima-san is really the only one I can rely on.

“Wha?” Madarai’s eyes suddenly widened. “W-When did...”

When did what? I did not like the sound of those words. I looked behind me fearfully.

“.....”

What did she say it was again? I looked at my notebook again and remembered. That’s right, I know now.

“... That was Shukuchi, wasn’t it?”

When I looked behind me there wasn’t anyone there. Without realising it, Enoshima Junko’s figure, shape and shadow was gone.

“Looks like you’ve been left behind.” It was a voice from behind me. Looking back in front of my I saw Madarai. He looked down at me with tenacity. “But there’s no one to blame for it. I’ll just have to deal with her later. The order has just changed... that’s all.”

His words were like a death sentence, I finally noticed my own basic mistake. I was idiotically relying on Enoshima Junko. So I’m not really complaining about it. In any case, I have to do something!

I looked doubtfully to where I dropped my notebook. I heard Madarai’s voice.

“... Oy, why do you keep looking at that notebook?”

“U-Uhm... that’s...” I couldn’t lift my face. My mind went blank and I forcibly flicked through the notebook. With how things were now, I couldn’t find a good way to escape. I tried my best to stall for time.

“P-Please wait a moment. Your purpose is to investigate The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope’s Peak Academy’s History, isn’t it? I don’t think it’ll do any good questioning me on it. Since I know nothing about the inci-”

“Why do you know it’s name?” Madarai’s cold voice made me flinch and tremblr.

“W-What do you mean?”

“Earlier I only referred to it as “that incident”. Why do you know about The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope’s Peak Academy’s History?”

I raised my face timidly, Madarai glared at me with a growing intensity. I looked back at my notebook immediately to escape from his gaze.

“T-That’s... well, um... I only just heard about it myself... I-I didn’t know it was an actual thing...”

“In the first place, as far as the name “The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope’s Peak Academy’s History”, only a few people in this school know. The fact that you talked about it with no hesitation means you really are suspicious. Looks like I really hit the jackpot.”

I didn’t have to look to know, his reptile-like cruel eyes were smiling. A shiver went down my spine. My cold limbs went stiff and I was completely paralyzed.

This is the end.

This was probably the first time since my birth that I was fully conscious of my death. My head went completely blank and-

Matsuda-kun.

I really do love him.

Even if I do say that though, memories like a revolving lantern never came into my head. My memories for him are just feelings I have after all. So I whispered his name in my mind and tried to remember...

Matsuda-kun, Matsuda-kun, Matsuda-kun, Matsuda-kun, Matsuda-kun, Matsuda-kun, Matsuda-kun, Matsuda-kun...

Huh?

Um, let’s try that again.

Matsuda-kun, Matsuda-kun, Matsuda-kun, Matsuda-kun, Matsuda-kun, Matsuda-kun, Matsuda-kun... Matsuda-kun...

... Huh... ?

It’s weird, I don’t feel any better.

“I can’t... remember... ?”

My whole body felt fuzzy. The fact that I couldn’t remember Matsuda-kun anymore, that brought on an unprecedented attack of fear and loneliness.

Is this a feeling of loss from forgetting Matsuda-kun?

It was an awful feeling I had never felt before, like I had been sent to the depths of hell. It was an awful feeling, as if my body was being eaten away by a thousand evil monsters.

“What’s wrong? Your face has gone white.”

“... Eh?” I looked up at Madarai’s face and finally understood. The man in front of me had made me so scared, right now I can’t control my emotions at all. Because of that, I can’t remember my feelings for Matsuda-kun at all.

“You look like you’re about to be attacked.” He laughed at his own awful joke.

Matsuda-kun, Matsuda-kun.

Even though I was completely overcome by fear, I continued to repeat his name in my mind. But I tried not to show my fear. I desperately whispered his name over and over again. Like a prayer, I repeated his name with my emotions.

I want to see Matsuda-kun’s face. I want to hear Matsuda-kun’s voice. I want to smell Matsuda-kun’s scent. I want to touch Matsuda-kun. I want to meet Matsuda-kun. I want to meet Matsuda-kun. I want to meet Matsuda-kun.

Then suddenly...

My heart leapt and thumped heavily and my blood pumped through my body at breakneck speed. I felt warm and my limbs frozen from fear were once again able to move.

I want to meet Matsuda-kun.

I kept on muttering that small phrase, and the fear I had melted away.

I want to meet Matsuda-kun! I want to meet Matsuda-kun! I want to meet Matsuda-kun!!

“... I want to... meet Matsuda-kun...”

“...Hm?” Having noticed my strangeness, Madarai took a moment to distance himself from me. Perhaps he’s just cautious by nature. I calmly analyzed and thought about the situation. Remaining collected, I re-read the notebook quickly in my head. I suddenly looked at the first page. I could see “a certain ability” I had written down. I wonder why I never noticed it before. This is surely the power of love Matsuda-kun and I hold!

I’ll meet Matsuda-kun! I’ll meet Matsuda-kun! I’ll meet Matsuda-kun!

It wasn't just a desire anymore, it was my entire purpose now, I felt warmer just thinking about it.

"... You, move now." I raised my head from my notebook and stared at Madarai, "I'm going to meet Matsuda-kun!"

"Who's 'Matsuda-kun'... What's with this sudden change in character?"

"It's love of course!" I triumphantly yelled out. "It's the power of the love I have for Matsuda-kun!" I cried out without any shame.

"Erm, the power of love and all that is great... it drives people to do insane things at stupid times ... But, even after all that, I don't really understand you at all."

"... In any case, you're being a nuisance." As I said that I glared daggers at Madarai.

"... Are you just desperate or something? This is a little awkward. Desperate people are always unpredictable at the best of times. No matter whether they're strong or weak, they're always a hassle to deal with."

"It's fine, just move."

"Yeah... I don't get you at all." He leaned forward and dropped his centre of gravity. He must be preparing to attack. But that's...

Not my problem.

He can't extinguish my red hot fire.

I will meet Matsuda-kun! I will meet Matsuda-kun! I will meet Matsuda-kun!

I had decided, so with my notebook still open, I stepped forward completely defenceless. Madarai responded by lowering his centre of gravity further and drew his fist back to his waist. He was ready. Though, despite being at the ready, it didn't seem like he was going to make the first move. He was just being very wary. He really does have a cautious personality.

But...

No, seeing as...

I stopped in mid-stride and declared,

“Madarai Isshiki, checkmate!”

“What do you mean, that’s a pretty lame line.”

“... Madarai Isshiki, it’s checkmate!!” I couldn’t think of anything else to say so I just repeated my line.

I was a like a wild animal about to pounce on my prey, and so I lowered my centre of gravity. I remained in that posture and pushed all the power I had into my legs until I couldn’t anymore.

All at once I released it!

I kicked on the ground with my all the strength I had and began to run with explosive force in the opposite direction Madarai had prepared for.

“H-Hey!!”

I left behind the surprised Madarai as he raised his puzzled voice and ran after me. As I heard that voice I opened my notebook again and checked the first page for the “my ability” written there.

That’s right, that’s what my ability is. I can use it to get me out of this situation. I couldn’t remember it before so I didn’t realise I had one.

After a while I could hear footsteps behind me, chasing me.

Maybe I should try out predicting something. If I could predict what that guy following me is thinking right now, I bet he would be thinking something like...

I don’t get that girl at all.

CHAPTer7



“I don’t get that girl at all.”

Madarai Isshiki muttered to himself as he was running. It wasn't that he was not being careful, it was the opposite of that. It didn't even cross his mind that she might run away. But thinking about it again now, it's only natural that she would take that course of action.

They say a cornered rat will bite the cat but in truth it's doubtful anyone has ever seen a rat bite a cat. Even if it were seriously injured or dying, it would not just stay motionless while cornered, it would run for its life. Since the rat has "his eyes on a goal" in that respect.

It's the very same for that girl running in front of him. She's running because she has her eyes on her own goal.

"... So then, if I apprehend her, it'll be over." He smiled cruelly. He had the face of a hunter chasing after his prey.

After I catch her I'll beat all the information she knows about "that incident" out of her.

The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope's Peak Academy's History.

Madarai hated that incident and all those involved in the incident with a burning passion. Now, Madarai had a deep drive to avenge what happened in the incident. Finally, the chance to do so was finally in his reach.

He had received information from a suspicious informant just a few hours earlier. Enoshima Junko, a girl who knows what happened, will appear at the Central Plaza. The chance of it being a trap was high, but he was willing to risk it. Even if it was a trap, he would then at least manage to see who it was who set the trap. That was his line of thinking anyway.

I will avenge them without a doubt.

So I can protect them, I will avenge them.

There was a spark in Madarai's eyes. As soon as his eyes spotted the target running in front of him, he sped up dramatically. His long hair flew behind him as the distance between him and his target closed. In next to no time, he was at a point where if he reached out his hand he would be able to catch them.

This is the end.

He stepped harshly on his right foot and threw his long right arm out as far as it would reach. His fingertips grazed lightly against their hair, for only for a moment.

It was then, as his hand brushed against their hair that they suddenly changed direction. Surprised, he lost his balance. They had perfectly timed their chance to change direction.

“..... Tch!” Madarai clicked his red tongue, straightened his posture and began to run after his target once again. However he noticed immediately, the girl ahead of him seemed to be running strangely.

“.... What.... is that.....” As his target was running, they were writing something in their notebook. “Huh..... ?”

She's writing while running?

It's impossible, that can't be it.

Madarai's mind was nothing short of confused. He was unable to understand their behaviour at all. The idea of “The target has no other choice than flee” was in itself unexpected.

That girl isn't just a rat trying to escape?

She's thought of different ways to escape?

It was possible they were simply bluffing. Ever since they first started running, they might have just been using caution as a way to widen the gap.

No, it doesn't matter what the reason is, he didn't have time to think about it.

To avenge The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope's Peak Academy's History. With intense motivation he had no time to lose. Madarai furiously increased his speed and was once again close enough to catch his target.

This time, it really is the end.

He reached out his right hand again and grabbed them from their blind spot.

No, the only thing he grabbed was air. Once again, his target waited until the last second and suddenly turned and ran in another direction. Unable to stop with the extra momentum Madarai saw a large tree in front of him in the darkness. Quickly he thrust his hands in front of him and the rough bark of the tree dug into them.

What the hell!

Madarai picked a direction, kicked the ground and sped off. He was quickly close enough to the target yet again to touch them, he once again reached out however, the target dodged the hand and fled.

I can't catch her?

Madarai became aware of that for the first time. Though, he did not know the reasons why. Firstly, they were looking at their notebook for the entire time while running, how were they able to see the hand behind them? In any case, he had reached every time with perfect timing.

They should have been completely oblivious to any movement behind them. No, that's not it. They should not have had the skills capable of seeing behind them.

It's almost like she knows what will happen before it happens.

"You've gotta be kidding me..." Shaking off his thoughts, Madarai started running at full speed once more.

He quickly reached his target once again, they left their blind spot wide open and so he reached out again. He was almost touching them until they yet again avoided the hand and ran away. But, it was almost like they anticipated it. Madarai mimicked them and reversed his movement as they had. With both hands open, he jumped towards the target. Utilizing his two hands he tackled.

This time I have you!

That is to say, the target disappeared completely.

"... What?"

It was as though they were reading Madarai's movements and then dodging them. With perfect timing they bent down at their waist and crouched on the ground like a turtle. They had let Madarai jump over them. Awkwardly Madarai fell down onto the hard ground in front of him. Lying on the lawn he found himself unable to move for a short time. He did not feel any pain however he was somewhat injured.

"What... the hell..."

Madarai finally forced himself up from the lawn. He looked around for his target, his long hair a mess. He managed to catch sight of their back growing smaller in the distance. As he watched them in the distance Madarai muttered to himself in an incredulous tone.

“..... For god’s sake, please don’t tell me she’s clairvoyant or something.”

CHAPTER 8

Clairvoyance?

He was probably thinking something like that, but of course I know that sort of thing doesn’t exist. No, it was real but only in dreams, no matter how much you wanted it to be real life, things like being able to awaken psychic powers in a critical situation is something that would come straight out of a shounen manga.

So it’s not anything as unbelievable as clairvoyance.

It was just a simple prediction.

I’m able to analyze his thoughts, actions and movements. After all, I was able to confirm my own ability with the help of my notebook.

Super Analyser.

Using that ability I was able to statistically analyze Madarai’s behavioral patterns and way of thinking. From there I predicted the actions he took afterwards. But even after saying that, analysis requires vast amounts of data. If I had no data I would not be able to predict his actions.

But, it’s all thanks to “Otonashi Ryouko’s Memory Notebook”.

Due to Madarai’s actions and behavior I was able to use the data I had written down in the notebook and predict his actions. In particular, the fight between Enoshima-san and Madarai had become a goldmine of valuable information. She had used various attacks against Madarai and in response Madarai had reacted in a variety of ways. Considering all that into detail now, I had seen all his actions and attack patterns. As for the reason of why Enoshima-san would go to such lengths, to be truthful I had no idea. Anyhow, it was thanks to that data that I am now able to grasp Madarai’s behavioral patterns.

Having said that, only a few minutes of watching him fight did not mean I could predict everything he would do. However, for now my only goal was to predict how he would act in this situation. I had enough data to do that at least. I was currently easily able to predict when he would attempt to reach me, from what angle and how he would do it.

But even after all my predictions, he was still not willing to give up.

I'm sure, after seeing my ability in full throttle just now he was stunned to say the least. This is just another prediction but soon he'll realise that the cause of such a phenomenon was simply my notebook. But he'll probably keep chasing me all the same. If so, he will begin running more seriously.

If he does, what are my options?

Along with the answer, it should come into view soon. While I continued my predictions, I looked at the sketch in my notebook of the Central Plaza to guide me as I ran. After going through a thick area of trees, I entered a wide clearing. As I had suspected, in the distance I could see a small building. That was the place where I was headed. As I found my destination, fear and courage swirled in my mind.

But, I have to do it. Forget about the fear and anxiety and just do it. Do it for the sake of meeting Matsuda-kun.

I'll do it. I'll do it without a doubt!

By the way, that wasn't a prediction. That was just my happy-go-lucky side shining through.

CHAPTER 9

There must be a secret in that notebook, that's the conclusion Madarai had come to.

Yes, that must be it. There's no such thing as clairvoyance. If caught, everything would fall under pressured circumstances however they persistently write in their notebook, meaning, they must have some sort of secret. Though he did not know what kind of secret.

In that case, I must destroy that notebook no matter what.

Originally, Madarai was not the type of person to have complex thinking patterns and thought structures. Despite how he may look, he's been told he has a cautious personality, though he wasn't always this way, it had just been something he had to become in order to continue with his responsibilities.

However, even after becoming what he is, his responsibilities have lost their meaning.

But, that's my fault.

It's my fault I didn't protect them.

Now his only responsibility was the find the culprit behind The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope's Peak Academy's History and exact revenge.

"That's why... I can't just stand around doing nothing." Madarai began running again. Everything after this point should be simple enough.

I'll catch the target, beat her and force the truth from her.

In defiance of Madarai, his target ran away from him as fast as they could. He fell behind somewhat but not too far. Even if they ran, he just needed to chase after them. As long as he didn't give up, there would be no end.

Catch, beat, truth.

Madarai repeated it to himself, confirming what he would do. He slithered through the dim, overgrown bushes and trees as if he were a black snake. He looked around carefully and spotted a clearance. It looked like an area of open space. Looking around he could see a small prefabricated hut on the other side of the area. Near the straw next to the hut was a flickering light. The entire atmosphere given off by the hut made him feel as if he were in a horror movie.

It's too suspicious to be suspicious.

No, that makes it perfect...

"... For someone who's lost to take refuge in." Madarai slowed down, he carefully walked to the prefabricated hut. It had cream coloured roof and walls that would under other circumstances give a calming feeling but when being lit by a flickering light they only gave off a sick feeling.

Madarai stood in front of the small prefabricated hut and carefully looked through the window to examine the state inside. As the light continued to flicker on and off, dust from inside the hut got into his eyes. This was probably a shed for the Central Plaza. There were things like paint cans and fertilizers placed on the shelves inside as well as cleaning tools spread around the room. He couldn't see anyone inside but the hut was filled with hiding spots.

Madarai backed away from the window and turned to the entrance. The door was a thin, small, wooden hinged door. He placed his fingertips lightly on the doorknob and after asserting that there was no trick mechanism he held the knob more firmly.

However it would not open, it needed a key.

Madarai knelt down where he was standing and examined the surrounding weeds. Most of them reached up to his ankles but there were the occasional few which were bent at the tip. Most likely evidence someone stepped on them recently.

It's decided then.

However he still looked conflicted and with little peace of mind. In contrary, the cautiousness he had forgotten a moment ago he remembered once more.

So, what kind of trap are you waiting for me to walk into?

Madarai took in another deep breath and exhaled. He turned towards the door and kicked it with all his strength.

BANG!

With a dull sound, the door opened slightly.

BANG! BANG!

He kicked the door several times in quick succession and the door opened wide enough to allow a human to pass through. It looked like a dark hole. Madarai bent down and entered.

“Excuse me...”

He stepped on some sand and the sound of silence rippled around the room. The structure was larger than he thought it was. The light flickering from outside the window was the only source of illumination in the room. In the corner there was a spider web, stretched finely. Across the room from the window was shelf placed against the wall, on it were a rows of paint cans. Small clumps of dust and gravel were spread across the floor and there were cleaning and maintenance equipment placed randomly throughout the room. Towards the back of the area were several large bags filled to the brim with fertilizer.

“Hey, I know you’re hiding somewhere in here!” Madarai’s voice echoed through the warehouse and he redirected his line of sight. Behind a pile of burlap sacks he thought he saw “something” small move. Like it was a reaction to his voice. Perhaps something scared and-

She's there.

With his guard up, Madarai inched towards the sacks. There must be a trap there. When you really get down to it, a warehouse is going to be filled to the brim with weapons. In

Madarai's mind he thought he could see a figure trembling behind the sacks in the darkness.

"... What are you plotting?" He asked in a hushed voice and continued to proceed through the room. By the time he had reached the centre of the room his eyes had completely readjusted to the darkness.

"Well, if it's a fight you want I'm happy to accomodate." Madarai said with a heartless voice and an unaffected expression. "But if you do, you'll regret it. You'll only feel pai-!?!?"

In that moment, he couldn't understand what happened at all. He felt something hit his face and his vision went blank.

".... Ku!" While groaning he opened his eyes slightly to try to see what happened. He was surrounded by a white fog.

"... Hya!"

In front of him stood someone on the other side of the burlap sacks, throwing clumps white dust at him. The clumps hit him hard and disintegrated into hundreds of small particles falling around him. As the girl finished her throw she shoved her hand back into the bag in front of her and grabbed another mound of white powder to throw at him.

"Hya! Hya!"

He stood there, surprised with his mouth hanging open. It was hardly what one could call a fight, it was nothing but a childish game. Like a snowball fight, but using this white powder as a substitute for snow.

"What the... fuck..." Madarai's face changed to an angered expression. To waste his time on something so idiotic, his line of thinking went along that as he straightened to his full height.

I've had enough, it's time to end this foolishness.

The flickering from the outside light reflected brightly through the room. He was interrupted before he could continue any further.

"... Do you know what a dust exploion is?" As Madarai began to move once more she raised her voice. Madarai stopped walking and stood still unintentionally.

"If there were a fire in this situation... what do you think would happen?"

“W-What would...”

At the moment there was white powder floating throughout the entire warehouse. Madarai suddenly realized, if there was a fire, in an instant it would travel from one particle to another and soon spread through the entire warehouse.

“... If you did that, wouldn't you be caught in it too?”

“... I'm pretty much screwed either way, aren't I?”

As he heard that, Madarai remembered his own words.

Desperate people are always unpredictable at the best of times.

Madarai squinted, trying to see clearer through the white mist. Past the dust he could see the silhouette of a woman though he could not see her face. As the dust settled he was finally able to see her expression more clearly.

She was staring without a hint of emotion. Unable to peek past her facade he couldn't help but feel intimidated.

“Who are you...” That wasn't the scared face of his target trying to escape. She stared at Madarai without so much as blinking. Chills went down his spine.

“You have no reason to do this... in the first place, you can't start a fire here.”

“.....”

The girl was silent. Sweat clung to his skin as the tension in the atmosphere grew heavier. His mood grew darker as he felt the atmosphere attack him.

Who the hell is... this girl.

The girl in front of Madarai stared without any expression at his own scared face.

Should I run? Strike first?

The two choices spun around his head, around and around, over and over. At that point he noticed his target's eyes changed direction. He looked over to where she was looking out of instinct. On the floor he saw a vacuum cleaner used for industrial purposes and immediately next to it was a power outlet.

That power outlet... it could create a spark!

As if his brain was playing the word association game, thoughts streamed through his head. Madarai was soon aware he was moving.

There's no room for hesitation!

Not even any warning!

Be faster than that woman!

With that, Madarai bolted towards the vacuum cleaner and grabbed the hose with his thin hands firmly, with all his strength he yanked it towards himself and-

And he had a bad feeling.

Something definitely happened.

Something very big happened.

However, the girl didn't so much as flinch. She was standing in the corner of his field of vision, even after Madarai had grabbed the vacuum cleaner with his hands, she didn't take one step. Rather, it seemed more like he did exactly as she had expected.

SHIT!

His bad feeling turned into a "beeline" towards a bad shape.

A trap.

But he saw it too late. A large shadow swayed into Madarai's view. The shadow was the shelf tilting towards him. The paint cans made a rattling sound and slid off the shelf in his direction-

Coming closer.

Just a little closer.

A rumbling sound erupted as dust flew everywhere.

Madarai was crushed under the large, fallen shelf.

CHAPTER 10

There was a deep rumbling sound and a cloud of dust flew up into the air. The paint cans scattered onto the ground and colourfully dyed the walls and floor as though they belonged in a magical world.

I breathed in the dust and coughed, over time as my coughing eased my chest relaxed.

After hearing of a dust explosion and seeing the vacuum cleaner there there was no reason for that cautious, strong man to just leave it there. It was the exact result I had predicted.

I opened the window to the warehouse, picked up a shovel that had fallen nearby and went to ask the crushed Madarai a few questions. As I faced him I tried to remain strong, but my legs were trembling and my hands were covered in sweat.

“Hello theeeeeeeeeere.....” Timidly, I looked through the gap under the shelf into it’s depths. Madarai was trapped between the fallen shelf and the ground like the filling in a sandwich. Though it seemed like he was still conscious, he looked at me with weak eyes.

“I r-really played into your hands....” It might be just because his chest was being crushed, but his voice sounded strained. “B-But... why wasn’t there an explosion? When the shelf fell.... t-there should have been enough static to create a spark...”

I tightened my grip on the shovel and responded.

“Ah, that powder was cement powder, it’s not flammable....”

“.... Cement powder?”

I readjusted my grip on the shovel so I could open my notebook with my now free hand.

“Uh, let’s see... the requirements for a dust explosion are combustible dust, oxygen and a source of ignition... Cement powder isn’t oxidized so it doesn’t burn. In other words you can’t have a dust explosion without the dust... or something like that.”

“So then... you knew that...”

“It says here the old man who owns this warehouse is awfully talkative... it seems like he enjoys holding very onesided conversations with whoever he sees... isn’t it strange he’d tell all this to a high school student? It’s seems like thanks to him I was saved, though I wonder if I should really be grateful...” As I flipped through my notebook I continued to speak. “As it turns out, this old man has an interest in DIY, and enjoys making things himself. So it looks like all the cement powder he buys is stored here.”

“S-So... you mentioned it as a decoy...”

“Yes, so I could get you to tug the vacuum cleaner.” As I continued looking at my notebook I nodded vigorously. “Ah, by the way, have you seen a movie called Home Alone? The trap I used came from that. It’s a gimmick where there’s a rope placed in just the right spot so when you pull the vacuum cleaner, the shelves fall down. Oh yes, and I sprinkled some of the cement powder on the rope to hide it. But since the rope I used was already kind of whi-”

“.... That’s enough.” Madarai interrupted me in a weak voice. “I-In the end... your real trump was that trick... ?”

“Hmmm, maybe not quite a trump. I mean, at the end of Home Alone it’s actually a passing adult who get’s the finishing blow on the robbers and not Culkin-kun. It’s the same in the sequel as well. So in reality my real trump was for someone to come save me-”

“I get it... so shut it already...” Madarai looked like he was sick of me talking. “B-But... isn’t it still too early to celebrate your victory?”

“.... Yes?” Surprised I made a strange reply and the mood changed. “Um... what do you mean?”

“I s-still... haven’t shown you my trump card... is what I... mean...” As he said those words, Madarai fell into silence.

I tried questioning him some more, but he didn’t respond. It seems like he’s lost consciousness. Left with a somewhat indecisive feeling, I read in my notebook that breathing large amounts of cement powder can leave you with pneumoconiosis, I should get out of here.

As soon as I left the warehouse, the weight lifted off my shoulders and I felt a refreshing mood.

Well, I can leave it to the security department to deal with him. I bet once they catch that criminal, everything will settle down again. Surely attacking a young girl like me is a crime worthy of expulsion at least, after meeting him-

“..... Ugweh” I heard a sobbing sound, quiet enough to be a small animal. I realized quickly it was me.

My throat squeezed shut. Something rugged had closed around my throat and I couldn’t breathe.

What's happening?

What's going on?

In my confused state I somehow became aware there was a jet black telephone pole in front of me.

But why's there a telephone pole?

To only add to my confusion, when I looked up, at the top of the telephone pole there was a pure white face. I suppose it's a human face. It looks like a familiar face. I may be forgetful but that is a very familiar face. Because that face is-

The face of the man who was crushed under a shelf just a short time ago, it was Madarai.

"... You looked shocked."

But he wasn't injured at all, his clothes didn't have a speck of dirt or anything on them.

"I know what you're thinking, you're thinking 'Why is the man I defeated in the warehouse just a short while ago standing in front of me strangling me?' ... aren't you?"

Madarai's mouth split into a huge smile.

"Remember that trump I mentioned... This is part of it." He narrowed his eyes and squinted at me. I could see myself reflected in them. "For the time being, I'll just break your arms and legs... it'll be painful but bear with it... Before that though, it would be wise if you fainted. It'd be a bother if you started screaming." He said ruthlessly rather than calmly.

He left no room for me to plead for my life as I vaguely registered what he was saying.

Madarai tightened his hold on my throat further and my consciousness slipped more and more. I could feel myself vanish and I could no longer feel my body.

I can't talk anymore.

I can't breathe anymore.

I can't predict anymore.

My notebook slipped out of my hand, my eyes lost focus and my vision blurred, Madarai distorted into the landscape.

That it, he distorted.

As his body was distorting, it swirled into a spiral. The sky became the ground and the ground became the sky, only his head stayed the same.... then that crumpled and I fell to the ground with a dull thud.

I watched everything in front of me.

I was dangerously flickering in and out of consciousness like candle, unable to determine if what I saw was real or just a dream, but I was seeing something.

“Ghghghuhh!” Making a sound like a frog, Madarai tumbled down from his position quickly. As soon as he fell down, he leapt back up. His own eyes transfixed on his right arm. Just above his elbow, his arm was twisted strangely, like taffy.

I don’t really know what happened, but Madarai stared at his own arm with a blank face, quickly realization set in and he screamed.

“H... HIGHYAAAAAAARGGHHH fghwaaaAAAAAAA!!!”

A wretched scream filled with confusion, fear and pain ripped from his mouth, and expelled all the air in his body. As I heard his scream, I was in a stupor, standing in the middle of a battlefield. Speaking of which, I’m not really sure if I’m standing or lying right now. I not really sure of anything, I’m not really sure if I heard a voice just now.

“Upupu, I wonder if I was a bit too harsh.” The voice said, it sounded close. “... But it can’t be helped. It’d just be embarrassing if you died here. After all, you’re the protagonist in this scene for once!”

That’s when I noticed something. It’s strange, I hadn’t noticed it up until now. A dark shadow was standing in front of me. On the black silhouette I noticed another familiar face.

But I can’t remember.

I can’t remember who that is.

“Upupu, you can’t remember who I am, can you? I’m absolutely correct, you know. Well, you don’t have to worry. If you look deep inside of yourself you’ll remember soon enough.” It laughed and the voice from the shadow suddenly lowered. “Anyway, before anything else I guess I need to clean up that mess.”

After saying that...

Everything began in an instant,

And everything ended in an instant.

First, she placed her hand over Madarai's head, who was still screaming like he was broken. With her hand she started to stroke him gently. Madarai looked up surprised, his expression remained as his head turned making a crunching sound and stopping at a strange angle.

I don't know what she did, but Madarai fell down, limp. Red froth was foaming out of him at my feet and he convulsed.

Ah, this is a dream.

It was a struggle to keep thinking straight, but for some reason the mood was much more relaxing.

That's right, I've decided.

This scene playing out is too strange to be real, I've decided I must be in a dream.

"Upupupupu" So the reason that laughter is echoing is my eardrums, it's because this is just a dream.

I noticed the black shadow was standing in front of me again. This isn't any different to a dream either.

"So, I'll remind you of who I am.... That's right, you can call me "Super High School Level Despair" I think. Upupupu." As she said that her familiar face appeared on her shadow.

Her eyes were a much too deep, dark colour. They looked more like holes leading into darkness. As I stared into those holes I felt my consciousness be sucked away. Inside those holes was a pure black bottomless pit filled with mud. I was sucked deeper into it and the mud eroded my body. As it happened, I could hear a voice say in the distance...

"Let's meet up again! Then I'll kill you properly!" It sounded like it was a voice in the distance, but it was a distinct voice whispering in my ear.

What a strange dream.

With that last thought, my consciousness melted into the pit completely, and I disappeared.

Chapter 11

“..... Hm?”

The woman tilted her head to one side.

“.... Hm? Hm? Hm?”

Enoshima Junko tilted her head more to one side.

“Hmmm. It’s nice that I came back and all but... I wonder, just what kind of situation is this?”

She got up from her kneeling position and look in front of her, there was something there.

It was a dead body.

The man’s neck and arm were bent at a strange angle.

“Ummmm, this guy is definitely...” She placed her hand on her chin and closed her eyes. She posed as if she were a detective solving a great mystery and after just a little hesitation - Enoshima Junko raised her voice as if she was celebrating.

“Ah, I remembered! Right, right, he said his name was Madarai! Looks like even in death I forgot you! I wonder if I’ll end up forgetful too? As if, aha, ahahahahahahaha!”

Enoshima Junko’s laughing voice filled the night sky and echoed around the place. As though she was surrounded by several other girls, her voice bounced around and sounded like a chorus of girls laughing.

But, the next moment, her laughter ceased. The girl seemed have grown tired of laughing and put on a bored expression.

“Anyway, where did that other corpse disappear to?” She asked and began laughing again.

She looked bored and cranky only moment ago but now she was laughing a huge smile on her face.

“Well, it doesn’t really matter where it disappeared to. Upupu, really I am too good at planning despair-inducing plans~” After saying that she returned to a sullen expression.

“But, I’m so good at planning them, they never go the way I want. Whose fault is this? Who’ll take responsibility for this?” After each word she changed her expression. None of them were just her putting on a facade. Each expression carried her true feelings. She felt a despair-inducing weariness, she’s that girl after all.

She’s “Super High School Level Despair” Enoshima Junko after all.

Enoshima changed back to her gloomy expression, she shuffled over to Madarai’s dead body,

“Oy, it’s all your fault. Hey, hey...” Saying that she began to prod the body with the tip of her foot. “Hey... What do you have to say to that... after you were killed by me so easily. Try harder to get in the way of my plan next time, I can’t despair like this.”

Her tone suddenly changed.

“I-It hurts. I’m so sorry~!” She said in a tone of voice similar to what ventriloquists use. She was mimicking Madarai’s voice. “Enoshima-sama. Forgive me~!” She said in a sarcastic voice as she pressed her foot into Madarai. A dark red liquid dribbled from his mouth.

“I’ve died apologising, so please forgive me~!” She once again returned to her own tone of voice. “A dead apology means nothing, since you’re already dead!”

While still majestically prodding him, she squished down his face.

Splatter.

A dull noise that sounded like crunching echoed around.

“Upup!” As if she were a one-man show, she erupted into obnoxious, loud laughter. But she soon grew tired of that, and returned quickly to her prime expression.

“Well then... looks like I’ll have to talk to my big sister about this. Though she’ll tell me off for asking her to help me clean up this mess.”

First there’s that filthy corpse.

And I also need to clear up that warehouse.

“And, finally... get rid of that nuisance of a guy Otonashi Ryouko-chan loves so much.” She finished in a confident tone. As she remembered again she began laughing.

“Upu!!” She opened her arms towards the heavens dramatically and obnoxiously laughed. Her cruel, gruesome laughter sounded throughout the night.

There’s wasn’t any reason for it.

It wasn’t emotional or necessary either.

She’s “Super High School Level Despair” Enoshima Junko after all.

Chapter 12

I finally woke up, and saw a ceiling.

It looks like I somehow fell asleep without realising it. Though, me being as forgetful as I am, I never really remember falling asleep so this wasn’t especially panicking. I calmly shifted my gaze from the ceiling to the window. Sunlight beamed through the gap between the curtains and filled the white room with light. It looked like the morning sun.

The room the sun illuminated was completely unknown to me.

But, that’s no different to usual. In this situation it’s important not to panic, checking what happened with “Otonashi Ryouko’s Memory Notebook” takes top priority. Without making a fuss or panicking I slowly rose up - only to find I couldn’t.

“..... What is this?” I was held down by a rope tied firmly to the bed. It was a well tied knot that I’m sure some could even call artistic, it didn’t loosen even the slightest bit. It was impossible just to move my neck so I could properly look around the room. Then finally - I remembered how to feel scared in this situation.

To be brief, my “What is this?” went to a “WHAT IS THIS!?” very quickly.

“W-WHAT IS THIS?!” But, even during my rampage, the bed only shook and rattled. The knot showed no sign of untying itself, in fact, if anything it only creaked, growing tighter against me.

“S-Somebody...” I cried out in horror, “H-H-HEEEEEELP MEEEEEEEE!” I shouted louder, and then louder after that.

“PLEAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAASE!” Screaming and screaming, all I could do was continue screaming.

“SOMEBODYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYY! SOMEBODYYYYYYYYYYYY!” I kept screaming like that for a short while.

“Shut up, trash.” Suddenly someone replied in an annoyed tone of voice. Despite the insult, my heart began pounding.

“Eh? Matsuda-kun?”

“You should shout quieter, dumbass.”

“It really is you!” It was the sharp tongue of my beloved Matsuda-kun that I heard, I quickly tried to look around for him - But my head was still firmly bound in place and I couldn’t turn it at all.

“Where are you? Matsuda-kun, where are you?” I raised my voice desperately.

“Where... I’m right beneath you.”

“Huh? Beneath me?”

“I’m under the bed you were sleeping on, you whore.” I ignored the whore comment for the time being, still, it was a shock he used such language around me.

“Eh? Why are you under the bed?”

“So I can control my frustration and actually concentrate.” I couldn’t really check to see if this was some kind of bondage play, but Matsuda-kun’s voice was definitely coming from beneath me. There’s no mistaking he was under the bed.

“But... what would require so much concentration to be under the bed?”

“This situation.” Somehow, Matsuda-kun’s way of putting it could allude to several different meanings.

“Hey, Matsuda-kun. If there’s anything wrong, you can talk to me about it, okay? I’ll listen.”

“I’ll take you up on your offer.” Matsuda-kun exhaled a long sigh. “Last night I was told a super ugly acquaintance of mine went missing, so I went looking for her and couldn’t find her anywhere. When I came back to the laboratory though there she was sleeping

soundly on my bed covered in dirt so, do you think you can understand my frustration here?”

“... Somehow, that sounds like a really bad super ugly friend.”

“It’s you.”

Oh, so it is!

“.... Eh, did you say I went missing?”

“A person who goes missing without realising it really shouldn’t be allowed to walk around freely. It’s a good thing you’re tied up.”

So then, in other words it was Matsuda-kun who tied me up. What a surprise! It’s a complete shocker that he’s able to tie me up like a true craftsman! That’s kind of exciting!

“Anyway, you can stay there for a while and think about your actions.”

“... Incidentally, how long do you mean by a while?”

“I think until the next World Cup would be-”

“Absolutely impossible!!”

“You don’t have a choice. Anyway, I think it would be good if it were at least for today.”

“That’s still too long! People don’t tie their lovers to a bed for full day!”

“Who’s this lover? I’d sooner turn into a squid than become the lover of a pest like you.”

“A p-pest...” His harsh words stabbed me and I lost my will to fight. It seemed like Matsuda-kun really is frustrated over this. After that he went silent.

On top of the bed, I lay silently.

Under the bed Matsuda-kun sat silently.

The awkward atmosphere continued for a while.

“.... Seriously, you’re always like this.” Matsuda-kun sighed after some time.

“... Eh? What do you mean?”

“I just remembered. You’ve done this sort of thing before... Honestly, you’re always getting on my nerves like this.”

“I’m not really sure if I want to hear this or not but... I’ll listen. So, what happened before?”

Matsuda-kun began telling his story. As he slowly and carefully said each word I could see it all in my head.

“It was around the time that you were still pretty early on in Primary School.” I was surprised it was such an old story - but at the same time, I was happy. I’ve been with Matsuda-kun for a long time, and Matsuda-kun remembered such an old story.

But of course, I didn’t remember it, although it’s not my fault I can’t.

“You were skilled at making sandcastles. Everyone in the park was pretty amazed when you started building a full-fledged sandcastle. It was the Sagrada Família. It was really surprising. Since such a small, little girl was trying to recreate a cathedral. You even knew advanced techniques, like adding water to the sand to make more solid, it took you a full month to build.”

“Eh, A full month!”

“The real Sagrada Família took 120 years to build, and even now it’s still incomplete. You were trying to recreate it perfectly with sand, so it’s not strange that it took you so long.”

But, even so, a whole month! I wonder what made me so dedicated to it?

“But no one could believe a Primary School student was making such an amazing sand castle. In fact, by the time you were nearly finished, a lot of people from the neighbourhood came to watch... Well, you never actually finished it.”

“Eh, why? Why didn’t I finish it?” When I asked, Matsuda-kun replied in a nonchalant tone.

“Someone destroyed it. It was really close to completion too.”

“D-Destroyed it... ?” That caught me off guard, someone stepped on it and turned it into nothing more than sandy debris. “W-Why would they?! There’s nothing more cruel than destroying something a little girl puts her heart and soul into!” I yelled with rage burning deep inside me while I was still tied down.

“You were crying a lot over it. I mean, a whole month’s work gone like that.”

“Of course I would have been!” I felt a ferocious amount of empathy for younger me.

“It’s probably not surprising but I was pretty pissed over it and started looking for whoever did it... but no matter how hard I looked I couldn’t find the culprit. Actually, at the time the Sagrada Família was destroyed, you were supposed to be the only one in the sandpit. But there weren’t any other witnesses so the search for the culprit came to a standstill. Even I felt just a little depressed over it... I stared vacantly at the wreckage of the Sagrada Família as I sat on the park bench, then suddenly you appeared out of nowhere. What was weird though is that you had this huge grin on your face.”

“Ah, I know! I found the culprit, didn’t I!”

“No, that wasn’t it.” He sounded as though it would have been better if that had happened. “You whispered to me, *“Don’t tell anyone but it was actually me who destroyed it”*.”

“... Huh?” That completely caught me by surprise. “But why would I just destroy a sand castle I had spent the last month making?”

“It’s annoying, isn’t it?”

“I-It’s annoying but... Why would I even do such a thing...”

“I heard everything. It wasn’t just “clumsiness”. If it were you would have said so from the start. No thanks to you I wasted my time looking for a culprit that didn’t exist.”

That means, it wasn’t just “clumsiness”, I ruined a month’s worth of work on purpose - That’s so idiotic. I can’t empathize at all now.

“In the end, I was easily fooled by you. Do you get it now? You can be really infuriating at times.”

“Yup! Even while tied down I’m a complete lost cause!”

“For once I agree with you.”

And thus I was convinced it was a good idea to have me tied down - Though I was still a little reluctant. No, it was a deep reluctance that was too great to express with words.

“Uggggggggggggghhhhhhhhhhhhh.”

“What is it, do you have a stomach ache?”

“... No, I’m just frustrated. Even after hearing about these memories straight from Matsuda-kun’s mouth, I’m just frustrated I’ll forget them again because I can’t write them in my notebook... Ugggghhhh.”

“I put your notebook next to the pillow.”

“Eh, really?” My heart leapt at such an unexpected act of love. “Which side? Left or right? Which side is it?”

“Calm down and look for yourself, you idiot... it’s on your right side.”

On the right to me is my right!

I desperately tried to look to the right of me, straining my muscles to see. Of course, I soon discovered my notebook. “Ah, there!”

I stretched out my neck like a turtle and grabbed a corner with pouted lips. While overusing the muscles in my neck, I managed to somehow open my notebook.

It was a good thing I got it open, but I couldn’t really write in it - while trying to figure out the solution to such a basic problem - my eyes skimmed over a phrase.

“and Enoshima Junko killed-” My handwriting was so messy the letters looked like hieroglyphs. I couldn’t understand what they said next.

“What’s this... Enoshima Junko killed? Is this from a TV program?” As I said that I heard a loud bang and felt something hit the bed.

“... Oy, what’d you say?” Matsuda-kun’s voice was suddenly very rigid.

“Eh? Um...” Confused, I strained to look at my notebook again. Another sentence jumped out at me.

“I discovered a dead body in the Central Plaza-”

Dead body?

After spending around three seconds trying to comprehend what those words meant, I screamed.

“A D-D-DEAD BODYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYY?” As I tried to get up the rope dug into my skin, “OW OW OW OW OW OW OW OW OW OW!!” I screamed in pain.

But Matsuda-kun asked in the same stiff voice, “Did you say... Enoshima Junko?”

But, I don’t know anyone by that name.

“T-That doesn’t matter, there’s a dead body... I f-found... a dead body! ... W-W... W-W-What’ll I do... I found a dead body... W-what should I do?”

“It’s more important that you answer me. Do you know who Enoshima Junko is?”

More important?

I felt a sense of discomfort in those words. Isn’t it weird? How can “that” be more important than discovering a dead body? It’s just too unnatural.

“H-Hey... Matsuda-kun,” I tried to stop thinking and just ask him. “You seem to really care about this Enoshima Junko person... Have you met before or something... ?” I queried and I heard short, quick breaths coming from beneath the bed.

“Hey, Matsuda-kun-”

“There wasn’t a dead body.”

“... Eh?”

“If there was a dead body... you’d hear lots of panic around Hope’s Peak. There’s nothing like that right now.”

“T-That’s not it... I mean that woman... what was her name again?” I quickly searched through my notebook again. It began to slip from my chest and I couldn’t reach it, even while trying my hardest with my neck and tongue stretched out.

“... That’s enough. You misunderstood me. That person has nothing to do with either of us. Forget it.” There was an air of irritation that floated in those words.

“B-But if you tell me to forget it like that, I’ll definitely start worrying about it... Since it’s written in my notebook, that means it definitely happened...”

“Not Necessarily.”

“... Eh?”

“Finding a dead body... and meeting a woman you don’t know... it sounds more like something that came out of your imagination... They might just be things that you’re misreading as real memories...”

“E-Everything I write in my notebook is real... If I wrote fictional stories in my notebook then they would get mixed up with my real memories.”

“You don’t know if it is or isn’t.”

“Eh?”

“You might really have mixed a fictional story in with your memories.” As he bluntly stated it, my heart clouded over with mist.

“W-Why... would I do that?”

“You always say things like “It has nothing to do with me”... But if that were the case, wouldn’t you feel depressed and lonely? That sort of thing would definitely start to affect you.”

“... Huh?” My breathing became deeper.

“That must be it. You were lonely so you wrote an imaginary stor-”

“I’m not lonely or anything!” I suddenly blurted out.

“So you remember!” Matsuda-kun’s muffled voice shouted back from under the bed.

“That’s not what I’m saying!” I cried back to him. Matsuda-kun’s words were right off target, he doesn’t understand me at all - All I could do was shout at him. “I’ve said it over and over again now and I’ll just keep on saying it! I’m fine as long as you’re with me! As long as you’re here, I’ll never be lonely! I’ll say it again and again if I have to!”

I breathed unevenly as I shouted at him. I kept crying out to him until my ears were ringing. It might have been unfair to constantly use my forgetfulness to my advantage - But I didn’t want to forget Matsuda-kun. That’s why, no matter what, I can’t forgive him.

“I know I’m forgetful... So why don’t you?!” As I said that my voice reverberated around the room - and went silent.

Awkwardly silent.

“Anyway, it’s a fake memory.” Matsuda-kun mumbled, breaking the silence. I didn’t really know if he was trying to force an end to the subject or not. But I wasn’t convinced he was right.

“If it didn’t really happen... then I can’t trust my notebook anymore... and if I can’t trust my notebook then I don’t know what I can trust anymore...”

“Believe in me.”

“Eh...”

“Believe in me and forget that memory.” My heart always thumped hard when I was around him but perhaps now it wouldn’t anymore. Now - just for this moment, it wasn’t beating any harder than it usually would. The ringing in my ears drowned out my heart’s pounding.

There were just two things I could rely on - and now they were clashing against each other violently. I was shaking so much I felt like a boat in the middle of a terrible storm.

“Otonashi Ryouko’s Memory Notebook” contained my only memories.

Matsuda-kun was my only connection to the world.

I suddenly was forced to choose between them.

Should I trust in myself? Or trust in Matsuda-kun?

I gave my answer.

“You’ve always been there for me, Matsuda-kun... So you can be my memory...”

Under the bed, Matsuda-kun remained silent. I waited patiently. I waited for his answer.

“I can’t right now.” That was the exact opposite of what I was expecting his reply to be. I was stunned, I could barely piece together a reply.

“You can’t now... so when can you...?”

“... I don’t know.”

“Y-You don’t know...”

“In any case, for now it’s impossible. But I can’t be with you constantly. There are some things I need to do.”

Some things he had to...

So then, he still -

“... That’s right. After all, you need to be concentrating on your research... That’s why, even if I chose Matsuda-kun to rely on... Matsuda-kun can’t choose me.” I muttered in a disappointed tone.

“That’s not it. I-” Matsuda-kun was stopped talking - he was about to say something else. He sat in silence and said nothing more. After a while - I wanted him to say something, anything.

“If you can’t do that... then could you at least cure me...” My face burnt hot and the ceiling blurred. Tears fell down my face. My nose was probably running too. My feelings flowed out of me and I couldn’t stop them.

“If you can’t cure me, then let me forget about you!” My voice wavered as I cried out. “It’s hard just being able to remember you anymore! But maybe it’d be better if I forgot everything!”

As I struggled the rope creaked and cut further into my skin. But I didn’t care about the pain, and continued crying out.

“It’s fine already! Just let me forget! Let me forget about you!”

I heard a rustling sound from under the bed. Immediately after, Matsuda-kun was standing next to me. He looked down at me as I was still sobbing heavily, he didn’t say anything. He reached down into his pocket and took out some crumpled tissues, still not saying anything - He gently wiped my face.

I stared at him. His face was unhealthily pale and he had long, narrow eyes. His black hair curved towards his eyes. He had girlish eyelashes. The same pointed chin. Small, thin lips. White, long fingers - This is Matsuda-kun’s face.

But, this man’s face - somehow it looked lonely.

His expression remained the same as he gently wiped my face.

This atmosphere has become a little scary.

I said to myself silently as I felt a strong sense of regret.

Matsuda-kun-

I mouthed silently and his hands stopped. He withdrew quietly and walked to his desk - I could no longer see him.

“M-Matsuda-kun...” I finally managed to say something.

“... I have an appointment now.” Matsuda-kun replied, still not in sight. “I need to look into a student for a little while... I can’t miss it.”

“... You’re going?”

“I’ll come back soon. We’ll continue our discussion then.” Just after he said that I could hear brisk footsteps and finally, I heard the lonely sound of the door shutting.

He’s gone.

CHAPTER 12

I let out a sigh and my body seemed to deflate from the sudden lack of air. As my chest tightened I was reminded of something.

“Before leaving, he could have gotten rid of the rope at least.” I said, feeling tired as I struggled under the ropes slightly. But the burning and pain I felt wasn’t caused by the rope. The reason why was obvious. I closed my eyes and tried to fall asleep, so I could escape this suffering, I wanted to forget everything.

With that thought drifting through my mind I slowly melted into dreams.

Slowly, slowly melting...

As if I had been freed of my heavy body, I felt as though I was floating.

Huh?

My consciousness rapidly reappeared and by the time I opened my eyes - I noticed the rope around me had been untied.

“... Matsuda-kun?” As I sat up, I looked around the laboratory. But Matsuda-kun was nowhere to be found.

So then, how did the rope untie itself?

I wasn't sure if the rope had untied itself over time or perhaps I had a hidden talent for escaping bondages, like a magician. As I pondered over it, I looked around the institute restlessly. I saw an electric kettle at on the back of the desk. Perhaps I should calm myself down a little by drinking some tea.

While I hosted the thought, I poured some hot water into a teapot. I could smell the gentle scent of green tea. I poured a proper portion into a cup and took a slow sip. The hot, dark liquid flowed down from the back of my throat to my stomach. I finally calmed down.

"Looks like you've finally calmed down."

"... Eh?" Before I knew it, a strange boy was standing right in front of me.

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!" Surprised I dropped my teacup suddenly - and it hit my foot. "OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOW!!!"

I writhed in agony.

"Ahaha! You're pretty clumsy, big sis!"

"W-Who? Who are you?!" As I was still in pain, the boy laughed innocently at my question.

"Hm? Forgotten already? Even after I introduced myself last night?"

Introduced himself last night?

I dragged my numb, throbbing foot behind me as I limped pitifully to the bed and I opened up "Otonashi Ryouko's Memory Notebook" which I had placed there.

"Ah! I got it!" I remembered, "Last evening, you were the one I asked to leave a message to Matsuda-kun in the dormitory..."

"Ding Dong, correct! I'm Kamishiro Yuuto from Hope's Peak Academy's 77th batch!"

"But, when did you get in here?"

I hadn't noticed him enter at all.

"Well of course you didn't notice me enter at all!" Kamishiro-kun chuckled out as he sat on top of the desk, "But you know, 'When did you get here?' is the completely wrong question to ask."

“... Eh? What do you mean?” As I replied, Kamishiro-kun grinned more.

“I mean, I’ve been here all along.”

“A-All along...”

“To be exact, ever since Matsuda Yasuke tied you down with the rope, big sis. I listened to that lover’s quarrel you were having later and everything. Anyway, that rope was tied pretty well! I’ll have to ask him to teach me sometime!”

“Um, so then...” I began trying to fully understand everything in my head, “You’ve been hiding in this lab, you were hiding to spy on Matsuda-kun and I?”

“How rude! I’m not a pervert, I don’t do perverted things like hiding to perv on people, I’m not a pervert!” He puffed out his cheeks, I don’t know if he was really angry though.

“But if you weren’t hiding wouldn’t we have noticed? I mean, it wasn’t just me in here, Matsuda-kun was here too...”

“Seriously, you still don’t get it? Fine, I’ll say it more clearly!” Kamishiro-kun gestured to his chest and announced in a loud voice, “You didn’t notice me because of my talent, big sis. My talent is ‘Super High School Level Secret Agent’!” If he puffed out his chest anymore he would have ended up falling backwards.

“Super High School Level... Secret Agent?”

“Yeah, like ‘007’ or ‘Mission Impossible’... Everyone’s seen those movies at least once, haven’t they? I’ll watch them with you if you want... The point is they’re about spies!”

“Spies... ?” Even though I couldn’t remember seeing any of those movies, he didn’t really give the impression of a spy.

“People have been telling for a long time that I have no real sense of presence... Like a table or chair in a room.” As he said that, Kamishiro-kun grabbed a melon bread from out of a pocket - though it was a mystery how on earth his pocket had enough space for that - and nibbled at it before continuing, “When I was a kid I used to hate my lack of presence... But, then I noticed something. Why not make my downfall my own talent. I mean, if I have no presence then doesn’t that mean I won’t be noticed by anyone? I’d be an amazing spy or ninja. There weren’t any drawbacks. I was gifted this talent from the very heavens! I could use this ability of mine to save the world and become a super spy!!” As he finished he stuffed the rest of the melon bread into his mouth.

“In short, you weren’t really hiding from us. Simply put, we just didn’t really notice you, right?”

He chewed and gulped it all down. “Hmm, that’s it!” He smiled widely.

“The reason I came here was to fulfill the promise I made to you... But when I got here, you were already here with Matsuda Yasuke so I thought to myself that maybe I wouldn’t be required to deliver the message anymore. But I realized it’d be a waste to just leave after all the effort I put into getting here, so I decided I’d stay and watch.”

“You used your ability so you could watch...” I frowned, “Why?”

“Of course, in case some trouble came your way.” Kamishiro turned to me and gave me a look not blending with his young appearance, he glared at me with burning passion.

“Now you’ve seen my talent, you understand, right? I can collect information and solve any case... No matter what the trouble might be, I’m the type of guy who likes to really aim for big things. Like an immortal terrorist who has stolen some nuclear warheads and planted them somewhere, that kind of trouble... Aha, it’s exciting just to imagine that sort of thing!” As he said that, Kamishiro-kun’s body begun to shiver with excitement. Madness oozed out of his innocent appearance.

“You are weird, aren’t you...”

“Of course! If I weren’t I wouldn’t have come to this school...” He seems to be honest at least. This is Hope’s Peak Academy - and I should be the same.

“So, what’ll you do? Don’t you think the more the merrier? After all, I’m a specialist for specialists. I’m a pro at gathering information.” As he said that, Kamishiro-kun took another sweet bread from his blazer pocket - I guess they must really work as good storage space - and suddenly stopped moving.

“What the heck, peanut butter bread! Yuck!” Kamishiro-kun drooped his shoulders disappointedly.

“Peanut butter bread doesn’t taste nice? ... It looks delicious.”

“What are you saying, Big sis?! Peanut butter bread is the spawn of hell itself! It’s like eating miso and rice together!” Rather than understand him any better, it became a painful process to coherently process what he meant.

“Yes, I see!” I couldn’t be bothered arguing about it so I just agreed.

“Aha, I’m glad we understand each other! Let me give you this!” He passed me the sticky peanut butter bread and thrust his hand into his pocket, getting out another sweet bread. “Wow! A madeira cake made with Yamazaki whisky!” This time he hit the jackpot. He had a huge smile on his face as he was munching it.

“Fhwee, haga fwah foh?”

“... eh, what did you say?”

Kamishiro-kun quickly swallowed down his meal.

“So, what’ll you do?” He asked me flatly with scarily serious eyes. “I mean, unless you think there’s no way I’d help you. You see, I’m not the type who would just ignore a damsel in distress, now am I? When you’re drowning, you don’t just want some people to gather around singing about peace of life and harmony. If you’re in some kind of trouble then just leave it up to me, big sis. Because I’m a person who lives for the sake of solving cases. I mean our situation is similar to how a penis fits in a vagina. People in trouble meet people who solve trouble... If we assume that, then we won’t even have to wait for a solution, right? Seeing as how I’ve already ejaculated the reason.”

“W-W-Wait a second!” I hurriedly cut him off, “Um... did you just go out of character?”

“Hmm, not really.” Kamishiro-kun said and laughed, “Perhaps... it was your imagination...”

His odd phrases bugged me a little but - I suppose it really was my imagination. I wasn’t listening properly. Yes, that must have been it.

“So, what’ll you do? You can’t just solve your problem by floundering around confused, now can you? Go ahead and take the plunge, you can rely on me, can’t you?”

“Trouble...” In order to help understand my situation I reviewed my notebook. I had completely forgotten just what kind of trouble I was in by this point. As I read the notebook back to myself, my painful throbbing intensified and -

I quickly closed the notebook.

What will I do! What will I do! What will I do! What will I do! What will I do!

It was more irrational than just irrational. What I had found myself caught in was more abnormal than just an abnormal situation. No matter how much I looked through “Otonashi Ryouko’s Memory Notebook” there was no way I’d find something to rival this abnormal situation.

It was a clear lack of data.

A apparent lack of experience.

What will I do! What will I do! What will I do! What will I do! What will I do!

I thought as I hastily raised my head and I met the eyes of a boy eating his sweet bread.

“Looks like you’ve decided.”

“... Eh?”

“So then, why not tell me what happened that led you up to your current situation!” He read my gaze and his mood completely changed. But there was no way to be sure. If I could not do it myself, perhaps I should rely on others - it was a simple theory that worked well enough.

Others - people who weren’t Matsuda-kun.

It had finally come to a time where I needed to rely on others.

“Hey, what’s wrong? Hurry up and tell me! Tell me, tell me!”

“R-Right... I will...” As if he were a puppy wanting to be fed, I rushed over to him and opened my notebook. But before I explained my trouble - I explained my “forgetfulness”.

“... Whoa, I can’t say I’m jealous but that definitely is interesting.” As Kamishiro-kun listened, his looked more as though he had found a rare foreign treasure. I continued to explain that my old memories had been stolen and that I had found a dead body in the Central Plaza and how I met Enoshima Junko.

As I continued to recount all the events written in my notebook my voice began to shake and Kamishiro-kun meekly squinted as he listened. As I finished my story he finally opened his mouth.

“... Hmm. I couldn’t have just heard Enoshima Junko’s name could I have?”

Huh? I feel like someone else had that reaction recently too.

“Are you surprised I reacted more to Enoshima Junko’s name than to the dead body? Matsuda Man reacted the same way just a short time ago. Ahaha, I guess it’s true that you’re unusually forgetful, big sis! Amazing, amazing!”

“... It’s troubling you’re impressed by that.” What I said was true - I can only hope he takes it to heart.

“Well, I’ve grasped the rough situation now. Since I’m a super spy, a dead body isn’t really all that surprising... But that being said, it’s still a strange situation. Especially when that Enoshima Junko person is involved... a very weird situation indeed. Hm, you were right, big sis. Good thing you came to me for help.”

“Could it be, you know that Enoshima Junko person, Kamishiro-kun?” I clearly expressed my tone.

“Yeah, well I don’t know her directly. But I feel like perhaps this was fate. Moreover, I’ve really hit bingo.”

“... Yes?”

“But you know, so far everything has played out so perfectly, like a Hollywood movie. However, I believe I’ll have to take over as the protagonist in the story. From this point on, in order to solve your problem, it’s turned into a thrilling spy story.”

“By thrilling don’t you mean old.”

“Ahaha, don’t strain your brain.” Having said that, Kamishiro-kun thrust his hand into his pocket again and got out another sweet bread, “Alright! A chocolate swirl bread!” He cried out before continuing with his description.

“I’ve also started to look into a somewhat ‘unrelated case’... I know Enoshima Junko’s name because she popped up in the ‘unrelated case’ investigation. However, she wasn’t a key person so I figured she didn’t matter... But, if she’s also related to your problem then that makes it a different story. Since it’s too much of a coincidence to be involved in both of these cases I’m investigating.”

Kamishiro-kun’s eyes glistened. They ignited as he spoke more about this troublesome issue.

“By the way, are you curious by this ‘unrelated case’? Hmmmm? You are, aren’t you?”

“Y-Yeah... I am...” As Kamishiro-kun pressed more I simply gave in and replied supportively.

“Whatever shall I do? I’m not really supposed to talk about this to unrelated people...” He spoke with an all important attitude. “Well, whatever!” But after all that he just decided to go ahead with it anyway. What a troublesome guy!

“Well, you see... firstly, it may be a little to subtle to call it an ‘unrelated case’.”

“... Eh, what do you mean?”

“There may be a connection between them... is what I mean.”

A connection?

Does that mean these two incidents are actually one?

“To be truthful, I think it might be better if I explained this ‘unrelated case’ to someone else... Since it’s pretty dangerous, it’s possible something might happen.” After finally finishing his over-the-top introduction he began to pace around the room. He acted like a detective explaining a great mystery.

“I mentioned ‘another case’... it’s more widely known as ‘The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope’s Peak Academy’s History’.”

As soon as he said that, my heart began pounding as if it were exploding repeatedly.

Huh? What is this?

The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope’s Peak Academy’s History - the name itself was ridiculously absurd and yet - I had reacted somehow to his words. I felt an enormous weight on my shoulders as I flicked through my notebook, my thought process had come to a complete halt.

“What’s the matter, big sis?” I came to the realization Kamishiro-kun was looking at my face. “You somehow look a little pained... do you need some kahlua or whiskey?”

“N-No, I’m fine... It’s nothing...” I took in some deep breaths and calmed my nerves.

“So, are you curious about... The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope’s Peak Academy’s History? Well, are you? Are you curious about it?”

“Y-Yeah... I am...” After more prompting from Kamishiro-kun I reluctantly answered yet again.

“Yes, well you see...” Kamishiro-kun began as he closed his eyes and held his hands up in an impressive pose, “I’m not really sure of the details myself.”

“Y-You don’t know?” I had a nasty habit of interrupting the story, and as I was about to complain before he continued.

“I mean, it’s just a rumour so far.”

“A rumour... ?”

“So far I’ve only heard rumours about it. If it really did happen, it’s still under investigation. Right now, it’s kind of more like one of the seven wonders of the school. The name ‘The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope’s Peak Academy’s History’ was something someone just gave it.”

“I s-see...” For a moment I thought it was something serious - I sighed a breath of relief and lowered my shoulders-

“Wait, isn’t it still too early to relax over it?” Kamishiro-kun said as he narrowed his gaze at me. “Just because it’s a rumour doesn’t mean there isn’t some truth behind it. If it is true... then that’s even more outrageous. It makes this rumour even more risky. That’s why I think it’s better not to just loosen up over it.”

The throbbing in my chest began to pound again.

“This rumour is pretty big and nobody knows who started it. Perhaps they, themselves, were trying to stop the rumour from being spread... In short, it’s a very dangerous rumour. That’s why it might be better if I told you too.” As he said that I suddenly preferred not hearing about it. That was my honest opinion. But even so I couldn’t stop him.

“But if you say you still want to know, then there’s nothing I can do! I must tell you!” He already assumed my assurance.

“So then, The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope’s Peak Academy’s History is...” As he said that Kamishiro-kun coughed in a very theatrical manner. “Fifteen Hope’s Peak Academy students going missing suddenly, and then the discovery of thirteen dead... That is The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope’s Peak Academy’s History.”

I was taken aback. It was too strange, too bizarre, it didn’t contain a hint of realism.

“It’s just a rumour... isn’t it... ?” I asked Kamishiro-kun, trying to confirm, he shook his head slightly.

“If it were ‘just a rumour’ then why would I bother investigating it?”

“B-but...”

“Actually, apparently it’s true. Some students at Hope’s Peak Academy have gone missing.” Kamishiro-kun replied in a hushed voice, as if he were in a secret meeting. “The rumour started about a month ago, at the same time fourteen of our students here were invited to study overseas... suspicious, right?”

“So by chance the same amount of people went missing... Ah, but the rumour said fifteen people, didn’t it? So then the amount of people don’t match up. It’s different after all...”

“It’s fine, don’t worry about the details.” He said while waving his hand, “Right now it’s only a rumour.”

It can be dismissed as a rumour, but if it were real then it’s very scary - Was that its purpose?

“... Well, it doesn’t matter. Let’s get back to the issue at hand.”

“Eh? Issue?”

“Oh boy, you forgot again? You shouldn’t worry, these incidents with Enoshima Junko seem to be related, don’t they?”

I read through my notebook quickly - ah, that’s right! I remember now!

To begin with, several students at Hope’s Peak Academy have been found dead, but that has nothing to do with me - I’ve been stalked by a crazy woman called Enoshima Junko, that’s my problem.

“Hey, are you worried? Are you worried about Enoshima Junko’s relation to The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope’s Peak Academy’s History? Or perhaps that there is some sort of hidden motive behind Enoshima Junko stalking you, big sis. Does that make you worried?”

“Yeah, so tell me!” As Kamishiro-kun approached me as I steadily walked towards him.

“Well, you see...” Kamishiro-kun had a huge cheesy grin on his face, “I don’t know.”

“... Huh?” I was attacked by a sudden wave of dizziness and I could feel myself losing my balance.

“... Y-You don’t know... What the... heck...” As if he didn’t notice my obvious trembling and shaking, Kamishiro-kun began pacing around the room again.

“But, a month before the rumour spread, that girl was apparently interrogated by the Hope’s Peak Academy’s executive office. Suspicious, isn’t it?”

“Very suspicious!” I straightened up my posture and raised my voice as I leaned forward. “Since she was interrogated and everything, doesn’t that make a criminal?!”

“... It’s a bit too early to say that. The rumours aren’t confirmed yet.”

That’s probably true. I repeated the hypothesis in my head, convincing myself that it wasn’t just a rumour.

“But you know, if there really was an incident... and if she is the one behind it... then shouldn’t she be locked away or something?” As he said that, Kamishiro-kun leaned further against the desk. “The person who spread the rumour behind ‘The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope’s Peak Academy’s History’ was probably Enoshima Junko as well.”

“... Eh?”

“In that case, she might not be the culprit. I mean, a culprit spreading rumours about their own crime... that’s really dangerous.”

“But is that really it? Enoshima Junko was the one spreading the rumour...”

“A few weeks ago a cryptic email was sent to the reserve students, and it seems like that’s how the rumour begun.”

“So the person who sent that... was Enoshima Junko?”

Kamishiro-kun swallowed down his sweet bread and nodded.

“I have an underclassmen who is good with computers, they’re a programmer. Every so often I get them to spy on the school servers. They happened to find that email by chance. The sender was unknown of course, but with a super spy like me on the case I immediately knew who sent it. Although, just to be on the safe side, I didn’t inform my junior of what the email contained or about the sender’s identity. I didn’t want them to get caught up in this dangerous mission, since I am a very caring and giving human being!”

I was about to ask why I was being involved in such a thing - but held my tongue before uttering anything.

“But, why do you think Enoshima Junko would be doing such a thing? Bothering to spread rumours about the incident in question...”

“I don’t know.” I replied in a refreshing but firm tone. “Well then, why don’t we ask her ourselves?” I had a flash of inspiration, “Straight from the horse’s mouth so to speak!”

“If I could have, I would have done that a long time ago...” Kamishiro-kun quickly shook his head. “I don’t know what to do... I haven’t even been able to find this Enoshima Junko. She doesn’t come to class at all, the teachers don’t seem to mind and her classmates don’t know the details why... She really is a carefree student. Seeing as how I haven’t seen her at all, it’s possible she just dropped out of school.”

“But I met Enoshima Junko. Inside this school too... it’s written in my notebook...”

“It seems like Enoshima Junko wants you to be involved in this. That’s why she appeared before you, stole your notebook and confessed to murdering someone, big sis... But I have no idea what she wants. I can’t do anything but cheer you up with my laughter. KYAHHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!” He said as he placed his hands at the back of his head and laughed happily.

“W-Wait a moment... This isn’t really the time to be laughing!” I told him off.

“It’s fine, it’s fine. We’ve got all the time in the world.” Kamishiro-kun yawned. “It’s still early days yet, so of course we don’t know the full story. Once I start investigating we’ll find out a lot of new things. Right now we’re still just guessing and putting out theories, we don’t know how much of it is true or not. What I’m saying it just leave it to me from here on out.”

Our conversation came to an end - We didn’t have anything more to discuss and Kamishiro-kun took another sweet bun out of his pocket. “Ah! A legendary three-flavoured sweet bread!” He happily puffed out his cheeks.

“Oh, right, right! I forgot an important detail!” Kamishiro-kun licked his sugar covered fingers and turned to me. “We haven’t talked about payment yet have we?”

“Eh? Payment?”

“Ahaha, don’t worry. I don’t really want or need any money... I mean I’m not really asking for anything amazing or anything...”

“Nothing important... so sweet bread perhaps...”

“Sweet breads fall under the important things category!” Kamishiro-kun hummed out as he shook his head vigorously.

“Um... so then...” I said as I tilted my head trying to think, Kamishiro-kun laughed at me.

“Something like, I don’t know, maybe a small favour for me.”

“Favo... eh, what... Wait, did you mean like a favour favour or...”

He had his big grin on a refreshing expression.

“Ah, I see, I see. You didn’t mean anything sexual did you? Sorry, sorry, I didn’t really understand what you mean. Anyway, you said nothing too amazing, didn’t you?”

No, that’s too embarrassing - I scratched my head and Kamishiro-kun replied with a shocked face.

“It’s good to know you have such pride in your body image, big sis!!”

“Somehow you just gave the word ‘shocked’ a new meaning.” I rested my head on one hand. As I rested my head I looked at Kamishiro-kun and asked him once more.

“So, by favour... what do you mean?”

“Well you may not have noticed but I have an unusually high sexual drive. In movies, after a spy solves the case, he embraces a woman, and big sis has that kind of face that just drives a man wild!” Kamishiro-kun said as he puffed out his chest.

“... That’s not something you should puff your chest out about!”

“Would you prefer a tent? Anyway, why don’t you puff out your chest, big sis. See, I’m doing it. Puff out that voluptuous, sweet, juicy, well-rounded chest of yours! Muhahaha...” I could see his ulterior motive clearly as he smiled evilly.

“U-Um... Say, do you happen to know where that sweet innocent boy from just a little earlier went... ?”

“Muhaha... Anyway, I’m really looking forward to solving these cases. Just to be on the safe side, you should stop taking baths. If you get smelly I’ll come save you.”

“T-there must be a manual on how to reset you to your previous personality!” As he continued I was having more trouble dealing with him.

“Well then!” Without even noticing my prior embarrassment, Kamishiro-kun clapped his hands, “That settles the fees!”

He scurried over to the door and with a quick “I’m off!” he ran out of the lab laughing evilly in the distance.

“W-Wait a minute! I didn’t agree to-”

rattle, bang

My sentence was tragically cut off by the sound of the door closing.

“I didn’t agree to... the payment...” My words echoed around the room. I sat down limply on the bed. “B-but... I promised...”

Though, that sort of one-sided promise could barely be called a promise. It was my fault it ended up so one-sided though I guess. On top of that, for a one-sided favour, it was way too one-sided. If the feminists ever heard about this I don’t think they’d ever stop rallying over it!

Speaking of which-

That doesn’t matter to me at all - right?

“Yeah, I’ll ignore it... if I just ignore it it’ll be fine...” I muttered to someone who wasn’t there desperately as I laid down on the bed.

The rattling noise of the lab door opening sounded again. For a moment I thought Kamishiro-kun had come back and I looked over to see-

A fair skinned man standing in the doorway - My heart thumped.

“Ah! Matsuda-kuuuuuuuuuuuuuun!!” As if I were a sprinter, I ran towards him in record breaking speed and hugged him. “Aaaaaah! You took too long! I feel like I’ve been waiting foreveeeeeer!”

As I hugged Matsuda-kun, his body went strangely stiff.

“Huh? Is something wrong?”

“I’d like to... continue that conversation from earlier...”

“... Hm? What conversation?” I didn’t understand what he was trying to say. I just don’t remember anymore. But, whatever’s fine. I don’t know what was happening earlier - But it’s fine as long as Matsuda-kun is here.

“Hmm, what sort of conversation was it...” I tilted my neck as I rubbed my face against his chest. I laughed out “hawhawhawhaw...” as I absent-mindedly rubbed my face on his chest. I thought he’d be a little angry if I stained his shirt but his reply was quite the opposite.

“It was bad...”

“Eh?” I looked up at him surprised. “What’s... What’s bad?”

Matsuda-kun stared at my face and coughed lightly.

“No, it’s fine if you don’t remember. Anyway, it was bad.” He replied, looking away.

I don’t really understand what he meant but my heart had stopped thumping and was tightening instead now. As it did I buried my face in his chest.

As I hugged him, I seemed to forget about all my worries. I felt like I was about to collapse into a pile of rubble, and he refreshed my feelings - Everything outside of this small room in this universe of ours was absolutely insignificant.

I suddenly became worried I needed to apologize. It didn’t seem to matter after I had started feeling so much better.

Now. Now is the only time that matters.

This is the only thing that matters.

Now is the only thing I understand. Now is the only thing I know. Now is the only thing I remember.

That’s why I just want to bury myself in the happiness of the moment.

“... Anyway, how did you get out of the rope?” Matsuda-kun’s voice brought me out of my thoughts.

“... What rope?”

“You don’t remember how you got out of the rope...?”

“Nope, sorry!”

“You really are a troublesome one.”

“Yup, sorry!” As I said that, Matsuda-kun sighed out and chuckled softly as he shook his head.

“Anyway... you’re starting to hurt me.”

“Oh, it’s fine for just a little longer.” I answered him as if I were a spoiled child and Matsuda-kun sighed. I felt his body relax and as if I held the entire world in my hands I felt a sense of achievement and satisfaction.

This is my world.

And it’s the only world I have.

I felt happy as I closed my eyes. *Thump, thump, thump*, I heard his heart beat in his chest. In my hands I held all I ever wanted, and the sound acted as one final blessing.

“Parade...” Matsuda-kun suddenly spoke up.

“... Hm? What was that?” I asked as my eyes remained closed.

“Somehow... the parade outside has become louder again...” I tried to listen for what he meant, but-

Thump, thump.

I could only hear the soft beating of his heart.

Right now it’s only Matsuda-kun and me.

Those things outside don’t matter.

So just-

I didn’t finish what I was saying. For a while longer I buried my face in my beloved Matsuda-kun’s chest. I reluctantly let go of my beloved Matsuda-kun, I went back to my room without my beloved Matsuda-kun, I took off my shoes as I thought of my beloved Matsuda-kun, I lay in bed as I muttered about my beloved Matsuda-kun and finally I melted away into dreams about my beloved Matsuda-kun.

Nothing else.

Nothing else mattered.

Nothing else was important to me.

CHAPTER 13

Hope's Peak Academy East District.

The courtyard -

The area surrounding the facility was completely dark, the lights outside were arranged at regular intervals but made little difference to the lighting. On the edge of the courtyard, outside the clock tower - stood a lone girl.

She squinted, looking at the clocktower in front of her.

“Any moment now.” She muttered quietly.

The girl stood there, waiting for someone. Although when she had first contacted them, they replied, “We don't need to meet” - she then offered an exchange of information and thus they made an appointment. For someone who made a profession out of digging up dirt on people, it was easy for her. For people she does not know about, it's easier for her to meet them in person - That was her opinion.

The hunger for fame is a scary thing.

Even if it's seems impossible, people are determined to become great.

And so she waited - for a member of Hope's Peak Academy's Steering Committee. She needed to meet them no matter what. She needed to talk to them face-to-face no matter what. She needed to talk to them about the cover up on “that information”-

Most likely, the principle, her employer didn't know about the information. That's why it was vital that she questioned him face-to-face.

It had not yet even been a few days since she begun her investigation, but she had a reason to be this quick.

She had an incredible talent - that was why.

That girl's name was - Kirigiri Kyouko.

She was from Hope's Peak Academy's 78th batch, her talent was "Super High School Level Detective".

Currently that girl was investigating "that incident" within Hope's Peak Academy.

"He's late..." She muttered, looking up at the clock tower again.

Five minutes late.

I should have told him to be more punctual.

As she frowned, a line between her eyebrows became more obvious. However as she looked at the clock tower once more, her crease vanished. In the distance she saw a figure. The figure seemed to be on guard as they looked around while slowly walking towards her. Gradually the figure became clearer - It was an old man with a black suit and tie, as if he were in mourning at a funeral. His hair was styled back with pomade and looked like a man made artifact.

As the man approached, his expression became clearer. He had wrinkles on his forehead that seemed to be carved into his very skull, and beneath them, deep set eyes which glared at Kyouko.

Soon they were around 3 metres away from each other.

The man stopped.

"... Was it you who called me here?" His mouth, drawn on his face in a straight line, opened and he spoke to Kyouko with a gritty voice.

"What the hell-" The old man's words were cut off.

Something fell from the sky and landed in front of Kyouko's eyes.

The man, and his words were crushed.

It seemed to happen in slow motion.

Or perhaps like seeing the frames of a video, one at a time.

A school desk fell from the sky, and fell onto the man in front of her. As he was hit by the desk, the man's body seemed to fold over in the impact, while the desk on the other hand bounced off him into the air. As that happened, another desk fell down. This one crushed

the man's waist and he bent backwards like a doll. Another desk fell and bent the man's neck at an unnatural angle - The man didn't have enough time to even look surprised. His face was frozen as he called out to Kyoko. The desks fell to the ground in a cloud of dust and the man's figure was obscured.

Immediately after, a delayed noise sounded out.

An immensely loud sound.

As that happened, a desk flew out of the cloud of dust and missed Kirigiri by mere inches, it spun like a spinning top behind her.

That was the crazy scene that transpired before her.

That was the outcome of the crazy scene.

The moment the man standing in front of Kyouko had opened his mouth, a large desk fell out of the sky and crushed him in a nano second.

It interrupted her thoughts for a moment - but only for a moment. As the dust was still settling she ran to the mountain of desks and started shifting them. A bright red liquid was already spreading around the rubble of desks. A dark liquid flowed from his eyes, ears, nose and too many other places to list.

Kyouko quickly decided to instead look above of her. On the roof of a school building she spotted a silhouette. Her eyes came into focus. Behind the figure, the moon beamed brightly. The figure looked as though it was holding something above it - they threw it.

A folding chair was speeding straight towards Kyouko.

She dodged it and ran towards the school building.

There was a crashing sound behind her.

She ran into building, keeping as low to the ground as she could and ran up the stairs. At that point it no longer mattered whether she made herself a target or not. Now she was simply running for a lead, even in danger she was just as enthusiastic. In little to no time she had arrived on the landing and found the remains of a padlock on door leading to the roof.

This school should pay more attention to crime prevention.

She thought sarcastically as she grasped the doorknob. She could feel the cold bite of the metal on her fingertips. She twisted the doorknob and the door opened quietly. The moment she opened the door, a strong gust of wind passed by Kyouko.

As she took a single step she looked around the rooftop, illuminated by the dark night sky. However, there was nothing there. She stepped onto the concrete floor and looked behind the door, every nook and cranny she could find, she searched everywhere.

But she really couldn't find anything.

I'm too late.

Overcome by a sense of frustration, she leaned against the roof fence. Looking up she whispered to the night sky.

"This is why... I hate my job..."

Chills went down her spine.

She had a bad feeling.

She turned around and looked at the courtyard through the iron fence.

A cold blast of wind hit her face and for a moment everything went cloudy. Around the clock tower she could see the remains of the desks and folding chair.

Of course they were there.

However the dead body - was gone.

Kyouko gritted her teeth as she took her phone from her uniform pocket. Her finger descended towards the call button but she hesitated momentarily.

Even so, she pressed it.

She listened to the voice of a man through the phone.

"Should we meet soon?" Kyouko said, not bothering to introduce herself, "I have something I need to report. I'll be heading over there soon."

CHAPTER 14

After a few minutes, the figure of Kirigiri Kyouko on the rooftop disappeared.

Riiip, riiip - A strange sound like something being teared echoed through the courtyard in the East District.

“Ta daaaa! A taser gun!” A high school girl held something like a pistol in her hands. The girl looked ahead of her at two security guards who had collapsed on top of each other. As they laid face down, you could see a thin wire coming out of their backs and connecting to the pistol the girl held.

“Hey, hey!” She called out as she pulled the trigger.

Riiiiiiip, riiiiiiip, riiiiiiip.

Along with the intense sound, the already unconscious bodies trembled and shook violently.

“...Aha!” As the girl watched, she had a crazy, ecstatic grin on her face.

Enoshima Junko.

She wore no makeup, as if she had only just gotten out of bed and loudly yawned again, in her hands she held a self defence weapon called a taser gun. A thin wire flew out from the gun to her target and through that wire, there was a surge of electricity. Normally such a weapon would not cause people to die, but she had modified this one so it was more powerful, as such it wasn't strange when people died due to it.

In truth, it was just to ensure she had an upper hand.

It was her self-defence weapon for despair.

After she had played with the taser for a while, she grew bored and with her bare hands grabbed the wire and shoved it into a bag. She then scrunched the bag up and threw it into a nearby rubbish bin.

“Well, that takes care of that. That genderbent Kindaichi-chan must have disappeared somewhere... Upupu, I wonder if we'll fight later?”

The girl patted down her chest and walked across the courtyard to the clock tower regally. She didn't bother to hide in the shadows, instead she tried to show off in a way to say “here I am, look at me!”. Of course, if anyone watched she'd just kill them, though it may be ominous.

“Anyway, that genderbent Conan-chan is trying to get involved, isn’t she? Well it’s the principal’s fault for meddling... But, I didn’t plan for her involvement in this scenario. Well then, what to do. It’s interesting that she’s here and all, but she might get in the way of my beautifully orchestrated plan... oh dear, dear, dear, dear, dear, dear?”

The girl seemed to topple forward as she stopped and looked ahead of her, at the debris of desks on the ground. As she looked at the mess of metal, her cruel smile seemed to melt off her face.

“... There’s no dead body.” Her words felt like they weighed as much as lead as they fell out of mouth. “It happened again... this is fucking despair-inducing. It’s so despair-inducing it’s like from out of a dream...” Her face twisted into a smile.

As Enoshima laughed, she kicked the folding chair at her feet. It didn’t look like she kicked it with much strength - but the chair flew a few metres away towards one of the lights and as if it were a ball used for pingpong, it flew skywards.

As the sound that reverberated throughout the late night courtyard disappeared, the figure named Enoshima Junko also disappeared.

Like a shadow.

CHAPTER 15

What was that?

Kirigiri Kyouko thought she heard something and stopped walking. She thought she could hear the sound of bells ringing, but as she listened more intently, it was silent all through the corridor.

Was it just my imagination?

Usually in this situation she would investigate until she was happy, but currently she had more pressing matter to attend to. So she began walking again and hurried to her destination.

In normal circumstances, student entry into the faculty building was strictly forbidden though Kyouko walked through the corridor at a brisk pace. In the dim corridor, only her footsteps were heard. Any sign of staff within the building had completely disappeared. It had most likely been this way since before she had entered.

For the time being anyhow, she seemed to have arrived at her destination quicker than she initially imagined she would. The plate on the door in front of her read “Principal’s Office”. After Kyouko shot a glare at the door, she opened it without bothering to knock.

“You’re already here. You’re quick.” The principal, Kirigiri Jin, said sitting behind his desk with a smile.

Kyouko looked around the room she just entered since it was her first time in there, though it was mostly out of habit.

It was messy - it left on other impression on her. What seemed to be sheets of paper and documents as well as other things were spread throughout the entire room.

“... I’ve been busy moving things, so I haven’t had a chance to clean up yet...” Kyouko noticed Kirigiri, he was scratching his head as he spoke. However Kyouko returned a cold stare. She was not here to chat, so she immediately changed the subject to the topic at hand.

“I met with one of the members of the steering committee earlier, but someone interfered...” Kirigiri opened his mouth to interject, but was unable to think of a reply, Kyouko immediately continued with what she was saying.

“He was killed. More to the point, right in front of me.”

“K-Killed?”

“However, his corpse quickly disappeared...”

“... Disappeared?” Kirigiri found he was unable to think of a proper response and instead just repeated what she said. However Kyouko ignored him and continued in an indifferent tone.

“But isn’t it odd? They killed someone right in front of me but then they hid the body. I don’t understand whether they were trying to show themselves killing the person or whether they just wanted to hide the body. Something feels wrong.”

Kyouko went on to talk heatedly on the matter without allowing Kirigiri to interrupt.

“Furthermore, there’s been another member from the steering committee has been missing since yesterday, hasn’t there? If that’s the case, he may be in danger. You need to get in touch with him immediately and warn him. No, not just him. All the members of the steering committee-”

“W... Wait a second!” Kirigiri interrupted her, standing from his seat. “A-Are you certain? H-He was killed, that’s...”

Kyouko did not reply - Instead she responded with a grim look without saying anything. Seeing that, Kirigiri lost all his strength and sunk back down to his seat.

“Why... That’s just...” As if answering his questions, a deep sigh could be heard.

“... Aside from him being hidden, he may have been killed simply because he had met me...”

“R-Really?” Kirigiri thrust his hands onto his desk as if he was about to stand again. “Tell me, why?”

Looking at the man - Kyouko felt a feeling similar to disappointment. She reflected that emotion in her gaze. She looked at him as if saying she didn’t know why either - in contrary to her expectations, the man did not bother to notice her expression at all.

“I asked you to tell me...”

After letting out a deep sigh, Kyouko answered quietly.

“He may have been killed like that to send out a warning... assuming members of the steering committee are being killed due to ‘that incident’.”

Kirigiri Jin gulped down the remaining saliva in his already dry mouth.

“Do you... already know? About The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope’s Peak Academy’s History...”

“To an extent.” Kyouko replied unexpectedly straightforwardly, Kirigiri frowned.

“I see...” As he said that, he slowly stood up from his chair. He blinked trying to take to heart what she said before asking again.

“So then, in short, members of the steering committee are being killed because we chose to cover up ‘that incident’?”

“No, it’s not only that.” Kyouko shook her head slightly. “It’s not just because the steering committee are covering up the incident, but also because of something else just as important is being hidden... I would wonder if it were that person instead.”

Hearing that Kirigiri took a moment to think of a proper response and muttered quietly with a thoughtful expression, “Perhaps... the committee knew who the culprit was, and have been hiding it?”

“... I knew it.” For the first time since entering the room, Kyouko eyes met Kirigiri’s. “I thought you didn’t about the criminal being hidden. I didn’t think you were even supposed to ask me about it... I see now, you were also involved with the criminal’s concealment.” Her words carried a feeling of irritation.

“No, you’re wrong.” Kirigiri quickly shook his head in response. “I wasn’t informed that the criminal was also being covered up. That’s something the steering committee had decided by themselves. For that matter, they haven’t told me anything directly. I’ve been investigating everything myself.”

As he said that Kyouko frowned. “...You’ve been investigating by yourself?”

“Is that really so strange?” Kirigiri replied bitterly, “I’ve been doing as much as I can. After all, the blood of the great detective family flows in my veins-”

“STOP IT!” Kyouko suddenly shouted.

In surprise, Kirigiri raised his head and looked at her - Kyouko was patiently glaring at him. (how the fuck do you patiently glare at someone??)

The girl didn’t bother to try hiding the emotions bubbling up inside of her. Eyes filled with anger looked straight at Kirigiri. Looked straight at her employer. Looked straight at the school principal. Looked straight at her biological father.

“Don’t say it liked some kind of sick joke.” That’s why-

“... Sorry.” He could only apologize. “... That was tasteless of me.” As he said that, he deeply bowed. No matter what the reasons were, no matter what her thoughts were, if she looked at him, he was only reminded of the home and daughter he abandoned. He wasn’t wrong in doing so. He was not going offer any excuses, he had no reason to.

But at the very least-

He could tell her his thoughts-

No, he couldn’t say that either.

“... It’s fine.” A voice replied as his head rose - Kyouko had returned to her cool, collected appearance. She was leaning against a bookcase on the wall. “Let’s get back on topic.” She continued, calmly.

“Sorry, well then...” Kirigiri expelled a deep sigh. However, he had some trouble concentrating. Kyouko then said something that surprised him. The words spilled from her lips struck him like a sword.

“It’s Kamukura Izuru... isn’t it?”

Kirigiri reacted slightly. His eyes, his fingertips, his breathing - Kyouko didn’t miss his reaction.

“... I was right?” As if he had been put under arrest by her gaze - Kirigiri had remembered something. No, not remembered, it was hatred, the eyes of the detective clan he had become so scared of. The eyes that glared at criminals, that spied, that could detect any secret. His own daughter glared at him with such eyes, Kirigiri’s mouth slackened.



As to be expected, she has the talent of the Kirigiri family!

What a wonderful talent!

“... What’s wrong?” Kyouko inquired.

“Nothing, I was just a little impressed...” Kirigiri answered, smiling slightly. “In such a short time you were able to find out about Kamukura Izuru and about The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope’s Peak Academy’s History at my request, furthermore you deducted that Kamukura Izuru was the culprit behind The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope’s Peak Academy’s History... remarkable.” In his own excitement, Kirigiri had begun talking quite fast.

“In any case, I wonder if perhaps you could give me more information. Who is this Kamukura Izuru person from the rumours? It’s strange but I’m not even aware of whether they’re a man or a woman yet...”

However, Kirigiri immediately shook his head.

“I better not say.” At the same time the smile on his face disappeared.

“... I see, that’s fine.” *I’ll just find out by myself-* though she did not say the next part but instead backed down and shifted her gaze to her feet before continuing. “So then, you really don’t know. Why would you ask me to find Kamukura knowing they are the criminal behind the incident? You’re trying to cover it up, aren’t you? Wouldn’t it be better for the steering committee to continue to shelter them?”

“No, I can’t leave this to the steering committee...”

“... Hm?” Kyouko grimaced. “Could it be you and your staff don’t trust the steering committee?”

“No, that’s not it at all.” Kirigiri replied immediately, destroying the calm mood. “But I don’t think they’re right... They’ll end up making the problem worse.”

“Worse?”

“I don’t think it’ll just end after hiding ‘that incident’... that’s what I’m thinking.”

Without bothering to urge him on, Kyouko continued to listen to Kirigiri’s story.

“It’s not because ‘that incident’ is already over and done with. Rather, somewhere out there, the incident is still continuing... I have a feeling. If this feeling keeps tugging at me... I fear something irreversible may happen. That’s why it’s necessary to hear of Kamukura’s story. However, even now I am not sure of the whereabouts of the steering committee. It makes it hard for me to trust them.”

“.....” As Kirigiri finished, something struck Kyouko as odd.

It wasn't something Kirigiri had said, but rather how he said it. 'Somewhere out there, the incident is still continuing' was what he said, that's what Kyouko noticed. Through his tone and gestures he conveyed a feeling of seriousness. But that wasn't all. There was a slight slip of emotion.

Unintentionally, she was reminded of her grandfather.

Kyouko's grandfather, Kirigiri Jin's father - was continuing actively as a detective as well as the head of the family. Kyouko's first job as a detective, though it was only an assistant role, was to help carry out some operations with him. Her grandfather had watched over as she carried out her role better than he had expected, he did not say anything but his expression was proud.

The man in front of her had a similar expression to the one her grandfather had back then. However she dared not say anything.

"... What's wrong?" Kirigiri raised his voice - She hadn't noticed the sudden silence.

"Nothing." Kyouko went back to the situation in front of her as she casually brushed her hair out of her face. "Anyway, it's fine, you were the one who asked me to look for this Kamukura person and ascertain their whereabouts without the steering committee knowing." As she said that she looked directly at Kirigiri.

"But, is it really okay to impose on you with this?" Kirigiri frowned for a moment.

"... What do you mean?"

"I said it before, didn't I? The steering committee are being targeted before they're harbouring the criminal behind the incident."

"In short, I am looking for the criminal, Kamukura's whereabouts." As he realized the meaning behind her words, Kirigiri's mouth twitched into a smile.

"Speaking of which, I myself am also a suspect... correct?"

"Even if you say that, I'm aware you are innocent." Kyouko folded her arms as she spoke. "After the body disappeared, I called the phone in this room... Seeing as you answered, unfortunately it gives you a solid alibi."

"It's a little harsh to say... unfortunately." Kirigiri quietly laughed before he bitterly grinned.

“Do you have any other worries? Don’t you think I might call the police before I find Kamukura Izuru?”

“I’m not worrying.” Kirigiri laughed. “For a detective the requestor’s word is absolute, but for the police the law is absolute. You never turn down a case, and that’s why you are the ‘Super High School Level Detective’.”

For example, no matter how much she hated a client, she could never show it.

“I wonder, why did you take the time to ask for me? Instead of me coming here to investigate by myself you decided to take it upon yourself to request my help?” Her words carried some emotion. No one felt more so than Kyouko herself - thus she cursed herself immediately after she said it.

“I apologize if I lead you to believe that’s true. I asked you simply due to your talent in the field. There were no ulterior motives.” He carefully worded his reply so as to make it perfectly clear. This only left Kyouko more irritated.

But she was more frustrated at herself than at him. In the first place she was not supposed to have any emotional connections to her father. She thought she didn’t even hold a grudge. Especially seeing as this was his request. It was just the same as usual, nothing made this any different to a normal request. So then why did she speak so harshly. This is completely -

like how a spoiled child would act.

“... That’s enough. I’ve had enough of this idle chatter.” Kyouko said in a tense voice, shaking herself out of her thoughts. “... In any case, we cannot afford any more victims. You must advise the steering committee. They cannot continue giving Kamukura Izuru shelter, that will only create more victims.”

“Ah, of course...” After he replied, Kyouko’s and Kirigiri’s eyes met once more. Kyouko turned away and started to walk towards the door - Kirigiri raised his voice unexpectedly.

“This may be a dangerous request.” Kyouko stopped unintentionally at his words.

“So what?” She remained with her back turned, only turning her head to look at him. “... I’m a detective. After all, I’m descended from the detective family, Kirigiri.”

“... Well, if you say so.” His words gave Kirigiri another unsettling feeling and she left the room at a brisk pace, as she lay her hand on the door knob, she heard his voice again.

“However, the preparatory school’s ‘parade’ has been becoming more serious day by day...” He called out in a firm tone. “Somehow their timing is too good. I don’t think ‘that incident’ is entirely unrelated. That’s why... I’m saying...” Kirigiri cleared his throat, trying to sound normal, “... be careful.”

He sounded like a father doting on his daughter before she went out. Hearing that Kyouko’s face softened. She didn’t reply at all. She remained completely silent as she left the office.

After ensuring the door was closed, Kirigiri took a deep breath and sighed. However, a smile lingered on his gloomy face.

She really has a magnificent talent.

He muttered quietly in his head - He couldn’t help but smile more.

After she left the principle’s office, Kirigiri coughed lightly before walking down the corridor, her footsteps echoing. They echoed the same way they had when she first walked down here.

The girl remained expressionless. She whispered something,

“... You didn’t need to tell me.” She heard her own voice as it faded, her silhouette disappeared into the depths of the corridor.

Chapter 16

There are so many different ways things could end.

Myself, Otonashi Ryouko, and Matsuda Yasuke-kun have decided to leave Hope’s Peak Academy. Currently we are waiting in the airport lobby. Together we’ll board a plane and plan to go the the land of freedom, the United States of America. Now that I say it, I’ve finally really realized it. Seeing as I’m with Matsuda-kun, I’m still in my world, I didn’t need to stay at Hope’s Peak Academy. That’s why it doesn’t sound like such an unreasonable story. However, if you’re worried about my crummy story continuing then please tell someone else about it. We’re busy. After we go to America we’ll be working in corn fields to develop a new kind of corn, then afterwards we’ll be going to NASA in order to move our base of operations to the moon. “Hey, Matsuda-kun!” I say as I eye the seat next to me, Matsuda-kun is busy doing something like rice-planting under his sheets. “Are you sure you can plant corn now? Maybe it’s still a bit too early?” I said and then he replied, “Fuck off! I’m burying the [saibamen](#) right now!” as he quickly planted the seeds.

“It’s no good, Matsuda-kun! Nappa said that saibamen don’t grow unless there’s enough nutrition in the soil!” I said but Matsuda-kun didn’t listen as he thump thump *thump thump thump thump!*

I opened my eyes.

I slowly rose up and looked around. Beige coloured carpet. A small vanity. An empty bookshelf. Everywhere I looked, there were notes saying “This is my room”. Seeing as I put all this effort into putting up these notes - I can only assume this is my room. I let out a breath and calmed myself - I didn’t have time for this.

Thump, thump, thump, thump.

Someone was pounding at the door to my room.

“I-I’m coming... Wait a moment...”

*Thump, thump, **thump.***

Ka thump, ka thump, ka thump.

Honestly, they’ve never heard of patience, their knocks became more rhythmic and annoying, I crawled off my bed - I noticed I had been wearing my shoes while I was sleeping.

Calm down, calm down - I thought as I ripped off my shoes, it was way too late for this, I grabbed my notebook from my bedside table and rushed over to the door.

“... Who is it?”

I took out the key and cautiously opened the door slightly.

“YAHOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!”

I spotted through the gap a girl with blonde hair wearing flashy make up.

“Uwaah!” Surprised I unintentionally stepped back.

“Hey, hey, are you always sleeping? You know it’s already noon, right? You’re like Piiko’s counterpart!” (Osugi and Piiko are well known openly gay talents in Japan)

“... Huh?”

“... No, wait, I meant Osugi. Anyway you sleep too much... That’s why you’re having trouble keeping up with what I’m saying!”

Somehow she managed to keep this conversation going by herself, just who was this girl, I opened my notebook-

“Oh dear, you forgot me? Fine, I’ll tell you myself, I’m Enoshima Junko-chan! ‘Super High School Level Fashion Girl’ Enoshima Junko-chaaaaan!”

Enoshima Junko - I looked through my notebook for any memories of her. Quickly an alarm started to ring out in my head. She was the egotistical, self-proclaimed ‘murderer’, the only girl I was supposed to never have anything to do under any circumstances!

“G-GO AWAAAAAAAAAAAAAY!” I shouted as I tried to close the door. But like one of those annoying salesmen, she slammed her foot in the door stopping it from being closed.

“What’s all this? Don’t tell me, you’re escaping? Hang on, what will you do if you hurt my feelings?”

“I-IT’S FINE, JUST GO AWAAAY!!!” With every ounce of strength I possessed, I desperately tried to close the door - I couldn’t get it any closer to shutting.

“DING DOOONG! I got it, a brilliant idea! Didn’t you say you thought I was crazy? Don’t you think I have a few screws loose? You don’t need to tell me, do you? I realized that a long time ago, didn’t I? Well, I have something that’ll blow your miiind!” As she was finishing, she threw her hands out wide with crazy eyes.

“W-What...?”

“Hm, you wanna know? But if you figure it out - your mind will be blown!” This girl’s like something from an alternate dimension.

“... But, that’s not what I’m wondering, I want to know how I come into things!”

“Well, if you’re so insistent... Excuse meeeeeeee!” Like a bulldozer she forced my door open and then entered my room without permission.

“STOOOOOOOOOOP!” As I tried to escape from her, running to the back of my room, she grabbed the collar of my shirt. “...Ughh!”

“You know, wouldn’t it be better if you stopped trying to escape me? I mean, after all, I’m the one who has your old notebook captive now aren’t I? Don’t you hate it? Haven’t you come to detest me?”

“I-It’s fine... It’s fine that you have my old memories! I don’t remember them anyway!” As I violently struggled, for some reason the girl let go of me, I fled as fast as I could to my bed. I pulled the blanket over my head and began yelling out to her. “So, just leave me alone already! Stop trying to get me involved! This has nothing to do with me!” As I yelled out she replied.

“Hmmm, I see, you’re just fine being holed up in your tiny world...” I could hear Enoshima-san’s cold voice through the blanket. “But you know, that Matsuda Yasuke guy will just end up dying... are you really okay with that?” At that moment, feelings I thought I had buried bubbled up and welled in my chest.

“W-What’d you say?! What are you going to do with Matsuda-kun?!” I tossed away the blanket and the girl crept closer to me and then, something unexpected happened.

Enoshima-san wore a huge grin on her face, and she pulled me into a hug.

“... Huh?”

As I was frozen stiff by sheer surprise, she softly whispered something into my ear.

“Hey, it’s okay. If you hate me enough, you’ll want to kill me. If you come to hate me then it’ll become all the more despair-inducing... and that’ll make this story all the more thrilling.”

“W-wait... Let go of me!!”

“Hate, despise, fight... break out of your shell and let the real you run free. You’re not so trapped in your world as you think. Now then, set free the new you. It might hurt now, but don’t worry. You’re still at the teething stage. Once you’re through that, it’ll be your birthday... and the real you will be born!”

I bit Enoshima-san’s ear.

“OWOWOWOWOWOWOW!!”

As she flinched, I took my chance and jumped back.

“I-It’s too irresponsible! Why do you keep trying to get us involved in something that has nothing to do with us?”

“Ahaha! Even if you’re not involved in it, even if it has nothing to do with you, you’ll end up dragged in!” She said as she rubbed her bitten ear - she turned to me with an

ecstatic smile on her face. “Car crashes, natural disasters, accidents, war... There’s a countless amount of people who die in them but don’t have anything to do with them, do you understand me?”

“T-That’s-”

“That’s the same! It seems like that to me!”

I quietly began praying.

Dear God, I beg of you. Please send a meteorite or something right now to hit this girl on the head. If you do that, I’ll continue worshipping you for the rest of my life, right next to Matsuda-kun!

“Besides, you’ve been involved in this for a long time now. You can say you have nothing to do with it as much as you like, but you’ve just forgotten about it.”

“... Huh?” My prayer was interrupted by an overwhelming sense of confusion. “By involved... what do you mean... ?”

“Hm? It’s already happened.” She dropped her voice and spoke in a commanding manner. “The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope’s Peak Academy’s History. You’ve got plenty to do with that incident.”

Quickly ‘Otonashi Ryouko’s Memory Notebook’ was grasped by Enoshima-san.

“L-Let go of... that...”

“Heeey, have you ever thought that memories you can’t remember are pretty worthless and meaningless? That’s why you’re Boobs-for-brains-chan!” She laughed lightly as she slowly grew closer. “You know, even if you forget your memories, your actions won’t exactly disappear with them... That said, even if you forget the modern world, your actions will still influence it, won’t they... ?”

“W-what are you saying... ?”

“Hey, heeey, have you ever thought about it? Your actions affect people all over the globe, you might hurt someone, you might torment someone.”

“T-That’s-”

“Honestly, what a cruel world. But it’s still the world... You’re more tangled up and intertwined with people everywhere than you think. That’s why one person’s actions can

save the world, and one person's actions can lead the world into a chain reaction of despair... Ufufu, it's too incredible. This truly is a worthy world to live in!"

I listened to her stupid, absurd speech, I couldn't bear to listen anymore and I had a shameful thought. Why is that? Somewhere in my mind I agreed with her.

"... Are you convinced now? Well then, let's go back to the start of our discussion." As she said that, Enoshima-san folded her arms. "From now on I'll go all out for you. In any case, since you're so involved with The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope's Peak Academy's History, you're probably thinking 'Just how am I so involved in The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope's Peak Academy's History?' and so, we should probably move our conversation to that next, shouldn't we? Is that okay with you?"

"I-It's fine with me... though it's a little sudden..."

"Alright, I'll tell you!" Enoshima-san ignored my complaint and continued. "By which I mean I won't tell you at all!"

"Which is it?" She could at least be a little more clear.

"I mean, it'd just be boring if I told you everything now... That's what I think anyway. So I'll explain what you have to do with the incident and about your real self... I think that's a good flow of the conversation."

"M-My true self..."

This isn't a game!

"You were just thinking 'This isn't a game!' but I can't tell you about that bit. It doesn't fit in the story. I'll just drop a hint instead... yeah, that's what I'll do. Because it's that kind of story."

I gave up as her wording became more and more messed up - There's no in trying point anymore. *How I feel translating this stuff.*

"Can you sum up what you mean?"

"I said I'd give you a hint!" Enoshima-san answered in an annoyed tone. "By the way, when I tell you the hint, my role here will come to an end. After I finish what I'm saying, I'll go away."

"G-Go away... Eh, really?!" I leaned forward without thinking. Up until I had been in a slump.

“Okay, I’ll tell you! Then I’ll go!”

“... G-Go for it, I’m n-not especially lonely... or anything!” I was kind of overjoyed with this turn of fate - Enoshima-san’s lips trembled as she opened them slightly.

“... By the way, since this is kinda important, make sure you write it in that memo book of yours.”

“I will, I will! I got it already so please continue!” As I prompted her, I readily held my notebook - Enoshima-san cleared her voice softly and announced in a loud voice.

“Ta-daaaaaa! This is an announcement! The hint is ‘Enoshima Junko-chan’s purpooooose!’” As she said that she held up her right hand and made a peace sign.

“In truth, she has two purposeeeeeees!”

Saying that she lifted her left hand and made a peace sign while pointed one finger up with her right hand.

“Purpose number one is the crush the symbol of this school’s hope, Kamukura Izuru, until there is nothing left!” She then pointed up a second finger with her right hand.

“And then the other purpose is...” She paused to think carefully on how to say it - and then she practically screamed what she said next. “TO KILL YOUR BELOVED DARLING, MATSUDA YASUKEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!!”

Flomp.

As I heard that, I noticed I had dropped my notebook. I froze. My voice was completely paralyzed.

Kill your beloved darling, Matsuda Yasuke.

As I thought about her incomprehensible words, fear and anxiety bubbled up in me and in no time at all, spread to the tips of my fingers and toes. I was stiff.

It was like I had been stuffed into a full body cast, I couldn’t move a single finger. As I remained silent, Enoshima-san continued to stare at me.

“.....”

It was silent again.

The girl kept her mouth firmly shut.

It stayed silent - Enoshima-san, with a trembling hand, stood up and left my room.

Thunk.

There was a sound of a door closing - I felt like an anemic, crouching down in a huge crowd.

“W-What... the hell.....”

My voice sounded like a small, dying bird trying to sing, my throat was squeezed shut.

“Matsuda-kun... she’s going to.....?”

Kill?

Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill.

Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill.

Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill.

As I thought about that cruel word, it seemed to fill my entire world.

“She c-can’t... She j-just can’t do that...”

My face felt hot - my hair seemed to stand on end as my face heated up.

“She c-can’t... do that...”

My chest felt hot too - a fiery fury welled in my heart as it began to beat faster. As that happened something strange happened.

A hot magma boiled up from the pit of my stomach and eventually exploded as it reached my chest. It spread from my heart and continued to flow to every muscle in my body.

I was motivated.

“I c-can’t! I ABSOLUTELY CAN’T LET HER WIIIIIIIIIN!!” As I screamed that I ran out of my room into the dormitory corridor. I wouldn’t have quite believed it myself, I ran down the hallway like a bullet.

In my hand ‘Otonashi Ryouko’s Memory Notebook’ flapped noisily in the wind. As I heard my precious partner’s cries - I yelled out in my mind.

I’ll protect my world!

I’ll protect Matsuda-kun!

The wind pushed against me as I ran down the dormitory corridor.

Matsuda-kun, wait for me!

I’ll be there soon!

Otonashi Ryouko runs.

To become the saviour of my world and of Matsuda-kun - I’ll run.

I still hadn’t realized it.

Me going to such huge lengths was in itself the very beginning of my own despair -

I still hadn’t realized just how despair-inducing it was.

To be continued in the next volume.

CHAPTER 1

“Yasuke-kun.”

“What is it?”

“Heeey, Yasuke-kun.”

“I said what is it?!”

“Why are you angry?”

“Are you for real? Because I spent my entire day trying to find a criminal! You should have said it was you who destroyed it all along! Why’d you lie about it?!”

“I didn’t really lie about anything. I just didn’t say mention it!”

“It’s the same thing! Why did you do such a thing?!”

“It’s because... you never leave your house anymore, Yasuke-kun...”

“...Huh?”

“I thought maybe if I made a sandcastle you’d come look. There’s no sense in making them if you don’t look at them...”

“It’s none of your business...”

“...Yasuke-kun, why were you hiding?”

“Shut up.”

“Don’t you like people seeing you cry...?”

“I’ll hit you!”

“You can’t hit a girl, Yasuke-kun.”

“You’re just another dimwitted girl with no personality!”

“I... I won’t cry... okay...”

“I’m not trying to make you cry!”

“I won’t cry! Because the person who really wants to cry is Yasuke-kun!”

“W-What are you saying? I don’t cry...”

“Why do you keep pretending to be strong?”

“I’m not trying to be strong!”

“... You don’t have to pretend to be strong in front of me... I don’t care if I’m a dimwitted girl with no personality...”

“.....”

“Anyway, if I saw you crying I bet I’d like you more...”

“That’s kinda gross...”

“It’s fine if it’s gross. Besides, I’ve decided something. Even if you hide, I’ll always be by your side. You can’t escape me.”

“You sound like stalker.”

“I’m not a stalker. I’m your lover.”

“Since when were you my lover? Is that something you decided by yourself?”

“Hey, since we’re lovers, I’ll be with you when you’re sad.”

“I’m not really... sad...”

“There you go pretending to be strong again.”

“I’m not pretending to be strong! I’m just not sad!!”

“Yasuke-kun...”

“In the end she didn’t even remember who I am! She just figured I was just some kid she didn’t care about! I couldn’t even call her mum anymore in case she’d get scared, I had to pretend to be someone else’s kid! I’m not gonna cry for her sake! Now that she’s dead I’ve got a load off my shoulders! I don’t have to be an actor in a play anymore!”

“But it was because of the disease...”

“I said it was unavoidable, didn’t I? I’m sick of hearing it! The doctor was always saying that! The doctor didn’t do anything! If he were really a doctor he would have cured my mum’s disease”

“... He sounds like a phony.”

“Hmmm... If I were a doctor, I would have cured her disease easily...”

“... Are you going to cry?”

“I said I don’t cry!”

“... Don’t worry. I’ll never forget about you, Yasuke-kun.”

“W-what... that’s a weird thing to say suddenly...”

“It’s not weird. I really mean it. Even if I forget everything else in this world, I’ll absolutely remember you.”

“If you do... forget, what will you do... ?”

“Then you’ll cure me, Yasuke-kun. If you become a doctor, you’ll be able to cure any disease I have, won’t you?”

“Well... yeah, I guess...”

“And, if you forget, I’ll remember you. But if I don’t remember, we’ll still be together forever! We’d spend our whole lives looking after each other!”

“I knew it, you really are a stalker, aren’t you?”

“Anyway, we’ll always be together! Hey, since we’ll always be together, it’s okay to do embarrassing things. It’s okay to cry, you can cry forever.”

“You... really are weird...”

“Ehehe, so have you given up?”

“... You won’t laugh at me?”

“I won’t laugh at you.”

“... You won’t try to comfort me?”

“I won’t try to comfort you.”

“... You won’t tell anyone?”

“I don’t have any friends to tell it to!”

“I don’t have any friends either... Or any family.”

For the first time in his life, Matsuda Yasuke cried in public.

CHAPTER 2

Hope's Peak Academy's east district.

The faculty building.

In the unpopular fourth floor's corridor, only two sets of footsteps could be heard. One set of footsteps belonged to the school physician. The other belonged to 'Super High School Level Neurologist', Matsuda Yasuke. The physician, with dark shadows cast over his face, led Matsuda, a depressing feeling floated in the atmosphere. Matsuda wore his usual dingy white shirt that fit him loosely, the hem of his shirt met his trousers and he wore a jacket of the top. It clung to his shoulders stiffly as he walked, most likely because he never wore it.

"... Ah, I really owe you one for this," said the physician walking ahead of him, Matsuda raised his head, "he's no where near my specialty... I was extremely troubled on what to do. So I appreciate your cooperation with this." He had a relieved sounding voice - Matsuda replied in an indifferent voice.

"Still, in the future you should talk to an expert about it. But, if you can't do that, come to me... That's all there is to it, right?"

"T-That's-" The physician choked back his words. Matsuda could not see his face from his position, but he could easily imagine the man in front of him looked concerned.

Did something happen?

Matsuda took some deep breaths to calm himself.

"...It's fine. I'm not going to use the excuse that I'm a student on you. No, instead I should be helping the experts more."

"I... I see... in any case, I owe you my thanks." The physician's face returned to normal. However, in turn Matsuda had only become more tense and irritated. He reminded himself to suppress his emotions.

Either way, there's no turning back.

So I can protect her I need to keep going on.

No, instead...I need to keep falling down...?

The physician continued to lead him around the corridor corner. Matsuda followed him - the atmosphere immediately changed. This part of the corridor was eerily silent, he felt the temperature rapidly drop. On one side of the corridor, every window was covered up by thick curtains. The other side was lined with a number of doors, on each door there was a darkly tinted small window. This corridor was longer than the last. The faculty building was exactly as Matsuda had imagined it would look like since he first learnt of its existence.

“...Usually, all the rooms are vacant.” The physician abruptly started to explain. He may have sensed Matsuda’s question.

So then, I suppose he means these rooms are only really used in an emergency.

He followed the physician, looking around absentmindedly. The physician who had been walking ahead of him stopped suddenly.

“... This is it.” As he said that, he gestured to the door next to him. There wasn’t anything unique about the door, in fact it was a miracle the man was able to identify the door.

“Apparently all the equipment has already been delivered but... Can you really go by yourself? The principal had asked for two people...”

“It’s fine.” Matsuda replied flatly.

“No, but...” The physician hesitated. Matsuda had rendered his argument useless.

“The principle and the steering committee have given me full access, in their absence they have left it to me. Besides, it would make no difference if two people went. Actually it would probably affect the subject in a bad way. So, I ask of you to please leave the rest to me.”

“Mhm” The physician looked subdued - He quickly gave up and nodded, not bothering to argue anymore. “I see. Well then, I’ll leave it to you.” The physician turned away from Matsuda and walked around the corner into the depths of the corridor.

After Matsuda watched the man walk away, he turned his gaze to the door in front of him. He slowly opened the door -behind it was a dimly lit, wide space. The first thing he noticed was the room was filled to the brim with various electronic devices. This place had more high tech equipment than the school’s humble school hospital or the research facility.

Well, that’s Hope’s Peak Academy for you.

That was the impression the room before him gave Matsuda. However, he felt tense as he stepped foot into the room. The fluorescent lights over him seemed to be unreliable in comparison to the ones used in the classrooms, the window on the back wall was also covered in a thick hanging curtain, the overall lighting of the room was quite dark. Due to that, the light emitted from the electronic devices stood out more. In the centre of the room was a bed, surrounded by the shining lights.

Matsuda's line of sight drifted towards the figure on the bed. There was a man sleeping. He slowly walked to the side of the bed closest to him and looked down at the man. He had shallow facial features and a pure and honest face, as if he were a swordsman out of a movie based on Feudal Japan, but something caught his eye more - there was a bandage wrapped several times over a painful looking wound on his head.

Matsuda knew who he was. The man's name was Murasame Soushun. In the top position at the student council, he was the 'Super High School Level Student Council President'. He was also one of the 'survivors' of The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope's Peak Academy's History. As if examining, Matsuda turned his gaze to the man. The man, lying on his back, had his eyes firmly open - although they saw nothing. They stared straight up at the ceiling, without moving, without blinking.

"... It's been a while." Matsuda tried calling out - but there was no response. He picked up the medical records next to the bed. He had already been told what was written there beforehand, more or less.

Murasame Soushun was involved in 'The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope's Peak Academy's History', during which he suffered serious head trauma. Fortunately, he escaped any life-threatening injuries, he was supposedly able to recover however for several days to even after several weeks he was still not responsive at all. The reason as to why remains unknown.

As Matsuda returned the medical record to the bedside table he tried raising his voice again.

"Do you know who I am? I'm Matsuda Yasuke, from your class. I'm the Super High School Level Neurologist they were talking about. We've met several times before." As he expected there was no response. Matsuda continued to prompt him, "So, why do you think I came here?"

As he sat down, he looked at Murasame's face. He stared intently, searching for any hint of a reaction.

"I was asked by the school headmaster and members of the steering committee. I said I wanted to help your recovery. Even though I said I wanted to hear about what happened -

they wouldn't tell me anything. In fact, they did the opposite. In order to cover it up, it seems they want to hear the full story from you." Matsuda paused and emphasized the words that followed. "Well, that's supposedly their intentions."

As always, Murasame didn't respond but Matsuda continued anyway.

"If you ask me, they don't like that you came back. That's why they sent me. So, even if I do everything I possible can, you can't stay. So, I don't really care either way. Having you gone will probably work out for the best for them. But what if you don't disappear? If you do come back, that'd really screw over their plans, won't it? When that happens, I wonder what they'll do... Once they get the story out of you, they'd be under a lot of pressure..." As Matsuda explained the circumstances he picked up Murasame's right hand - After lifting it up he soon released it. However the man's hand showed no sign of strength and dropped straight back onto the bed.

"But, I don't really know about that either... They're trying to hide and abandon the student council president... Because there's a criminal behind the incident, isn't there?" Matsuda leaned forward. Their faces were almost touching. He looked deeply into Murasame's unseeing eyes. *One false move and this will turn into yaoi ronpa*

"So, what do you think? Do you know the culprit? You need to tell me. Why are they protecting them?" As always there was no reply. Whether from his expression or from his eyes, there wasn't a hint of recognition.

"It really is useless..." Matsuda shook his head, looking frustrated. "Well, it's just the the examination that was the failure." He muttered grumpily as he scratched his head.

"Oh, that's right." He suddenly remembered something - he then asked in a tone feigning casualness. "By any chance, do you know anyone by the name of Enoshima Junko?"

Murasame twitched slightly and his eyes moved. Matsuda expression turned into a glare quickly. Murasame turned directly towards him. Seeing that, Matsuda's reaction was surprisingly quite calm.

I knew it.

He couldn't help but feel discouraged.

It would be better if he were still unconscious.

But, not surprisingly, he wasn't. Though that was also to be expected. Matsuda had prepared for it a long time ago. He had no choice but to fall down from here. Like a fate that he had been doomed to since the very start. He was cursed to an unchangeable

destiny. He knew he couldn't stop it, no matter what he did. The ground he was firmly walking on until now had collapsed. As he fell to the bottom of the deep abyss and he could taste it in his mouth.

It was just a metaphor but it was also quite real.

Even as he fell, Matsuda knew exactly what was happening.

CHAPTER 3

The sun's dazzling light beat down on the pavement outside the dormitory so brightly I couldn't help but squint my eyes though it wasn't strong enough to feel on my skin. In fact, I even shivered a little as the chilly wind ran past me. Despite all this I felt relaxed and stress-free as I sat down on a nearby bench and let out a deep sigh.

Ah, what a peaceful day.

I wanted to shout my thoughts out to the wind - I tilted my head to the side suddenly.

Huh? Wasn't there somewhere I needed to go?

I took 'Otonashi Ryouko's Memory Notebook' out of my backpack and opened it up so I could verify what it was I was supposed to do but my hand suddenly stopped. By chance the page I opened my notebook to was covered by a drawing of a man. My heart thumped a little faster.

"Eh, Matsuda-kun...?" I couldn't spot any differences between the picture and the real thing but my heart was only beating a little faster. Perhaps, it's not really all that similar after all. "Hmmm, I guess if I change it a little it'll look more like him...?"

It wasn't that I couldn't remember Matsuda-kun's face, I just needed to use my heartbeat in the place of my memory.

Maybe it's the eyes, or perhaps the mouth... I thought to myself as I drew. After some time my heart was almost pounding like it would in front of the real thing.

"Yup! That's probably more similar!" I patiently examined it as I gazed at it, Matsuda-kun. Matsuda-kun. Matsuda-kun. I repeated his name in my mind - See? My heart's pounding.

My heart beated harder as I brought the portrait closer to my face. As I drew more, it made the feeling stronger. I don't think I'm perverted or anything like that but I didn't want to kiss it in just a non-sexual way - I suddenly tilted my head to the side suddenly.

Huh? Wasn't there somewhere I needed to go?

With that thought in mind, I bid farewell to Matsuda-kun's picture and began flipping through my notebook. After turning through the pages for a short while - I finally remembered, at the same time I could feel my mood take a dramatic drop. I don't know why exactly but my whole body started to tremble. I remembered - I remembered that ridiculous murderer's confession.

That's right. Enoshima Junko also told me her purposes that time.

Kill your beloved darling, Matsuda Yasuke.

"She said... even if I don't remember... I'm still involved..." I was still trembling, she couldn't be right. I should quickly warn Matsuda-kun of the crisis he's in! I need to go to the biology building in the east district - that's where Matsuda-kun's neurology research is!

"I have no time to lose!" I jumped up from the bench and started to sprint with all my strength. Right now it was either break time or lunch time and the school was crowded with students outdoors. I pushed past people as I ran at full speed across the pavement. Of course, the people I pushed past would scream and cry things like "WAAH!" and "KYAA!" - but I didn't care.

Anyway, I was running across the pavement, leaving my thoughts behind and sprinting as fast as I could. I left any unneeded, idle thoughts fly away with the wind, my bullet of love was shooting directly towards where Matsuda-kun was.

I cut directly through the Central Plaza and arrived at the east district, I continued pushing past the other students and practically dived towards the biology building. My throat was dry and felt painful, in an instant I was leaping up the stairs. My breathing was erratic and heavy, I continued to push down my thoughts like how much my throat hurt or how much I'd like to take a rest out of my mind and kept sprinting. As soon as I arrived at the lab, I didn't bother to knock on the door, instead I threw it open.

"MATSUDA-KUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUN!!" I screamed with my remaining strength.

A short high school boy in the middle of the room straightened up in surprise and began trembling. His eyes were wide in surprise and turned to me, he was completely rigid and frozen.

Somehow, he doesn't look familiar at all.

Come to think of it, my heart isn't racing or beating any harder than usual.

“C-Could it be... you're not Matsuda-kun?”

“Mmm...”

“T-That's not a clear answer... ! Which 'mmm' do you mean?” I ended up yelling louder than I should have, but it was because I was still panting.

“Erm... I meant I'm not him by 'mmm'...”

“Then where's Matsuda-kun?!” I quickly looked around the lab.

God damn it, there's no one else here.

“He's out now, probably...”

“That's - If you looked, you'd know!” I roared back at him, I was at my wit's end. “Argh, come on!” I felt my stamina rapidly disappear and fell to my knees. “Of all the times he could disappeaaaaaaaraa! Where did he goooooooooooooo?!”

I continued ranting while I sat on my knees, the young man ran over to me.

“I-it's fine, you shouldn't worry so much. I'm sure he'll be back soon!”

“.....”

He looked down at me, why was he so worried about me? He looked at me with such concerned eyes, or maybe they were the opposite of worried. Maybe they were-
“... Actually you're a little suspicious.” I started.

“... Huh?”

“Or is your personality just like that? I mean, maybe you're the kind of person that stares at clearly distraught, high school girls... Eek, keep away!” I fell onto my bum and tried to scoot away - The boy quickly looked away.

Shocked, my skirt flipped up, and more and more of my thighs were exposed.

“Eek!” I patted down my skirt.

The boy was still looking away with his face bright red and spoke up

“I d-didn’t do that! You seemed worried so all I did was talk to you...”

“Y-You liar! This is the first time we’ve met, I’m a complete stranger, it’s weird to be concerned for someone you’ve never met before. I bet you just have some ulterior motive or secret intention or an evil plan or something...”

“... Eh?” The atmosphere suddenly changed to a more serious tone. “... A complete stranger?” He turned and looked straight at me, surprised.

Ah, that reaction, so then -

“... Huh? Have you met me before by any chance?” As I said that, the boy only looked more surprised, but only for a moment, he quickly changed his expression to a more formal one.

“My name is... Naegi Makoto.” He said, suddenly introducing himself.

“... Aah, it’s a pleasure.” As I replied, my line of sight dropped down to ‘Otonashi Ryouko’s Memory Notebook’. Obviously his name didn’t sound familiar to me at all, but I checked for any sign of his name in my notebook - His name wasn’t anywhere in there.

So then we haven’t met before.

I sent him a confused look, he returned a puzzled expression. His reactions were just becoming more and more suspicious - no matter what he says, this guy is definitely a pervert. I held my notebook in one hand, stood up and questioned him further.

“So, why are you a student at this school?”

“... Eh?”

“Huuh? Don’t have a reasooon?” He really was suspicious after all, I stared at him, squinting my eyes.

“Ah, no, there’s a reason, it’s just... I wouldn’t call it special...” As his sentence fell apart, he looked away, he was just becoming more and more suspicious - I continued to squint my eyes.

“I g-get it...” The boy nodded reluctantly, it seemed like he finally decided to talk. “Erm, since I’m particularly lucky...”

“... Excuse me?”

“So I’m ‘Super High School Level Good Luck’.”

“Super High School Level... Good Luck?” There seemed to be one underlying problem I was pretty anxious to learn about. “... So you’re saying your talent is good luck?”

“I don’t really get it either... but, that’s what the school told me. Every year one person is chosen from a nationwide lottery of ordinary high school students, that student is entered into the school under the title of ‘Super High School Level Good Luck’. So, by chance it turns out... I was the winner.”

Hmm, somehow -

“That’s kind of a jip...”

“Yeah, it really is, isn’t it?” Naegi-kun seemed just as troubled over it as I.

Anyway, his innocence was becoming more and more apparent - However I still had no reason to believe him. It’s much easier to just accept it as it was, though I’m not what you would call a loose woman.

“So, what is Mr. ‘Super High School Level Good Luck’ doing in this lab? Tell me, are you an acquaintance of Matsuda-kun? No lies!”

“Um, well...” Naegi-kun pulled something out of his uniform pocket. It was something that appeared to be a thin smartphone. “Matsuda Yasuke-san dropped this. It’s always a hassle when someone loses something so I thought I’d give it back to him but...”

“... What is that? I’ve never seen it before.”

“I’m sure this isn’t your first time seeing it... look, it’s an electronic student handbook.”

Naegi-kun explained that this ‘electronic student handbook’ was only given out to students from the main school. It’s a high tech piece of equipment with a variety of uses, as well as just acting as a student’s ID. If a student doesn’t present it, they lose access to some facilities.

“I found this by a bush in the courtyard. It’s an inconvenience to lose this so I thought I should come here so I could pass it back to him as quickly as possible... but he doesn’t seem to be here.”

What? So then, does that mean Naegi-kun is-

“I-It’s no good! I can’t do it!!”

“W-What?”

“I can’t say sorry to you for saying you were suspicious, you’re only pretending to be a nice guy!”

“I-I’m not suspicious!” He quickly shook his head, “I’m not pretending to be nice or anything either... I just came here to give back Matsuda-san’s lost item! That’s really all there is to it!!”

“... Really?”

“R-Really!”

Well then, I suppose whether or not there’s any more to this - I’ll just have to believe him for now.

“Fine... I see.”

“... You believe me now?” Naegi-kun breathed a sigh of relief as he laid a hand on his chest.

I turned to the boy, I pointed my index finger towards him, with the momentum it made a stiffening sound effect like the ones you read in manga.

“What you said was pretty misleading! You should have said from the very start that you weren’t suspicious!”

“Huh? Um, uh... Sorry.”

I don’t know why he was saying sorry suddenly but he had an apologetic expression on his face.

“But you know, I guess that makes you unlucky. I mean, coming all the way here to return a lost item only to find he wasn’t here. ... Ah, I shouldn’t be saying unlucky considering you’re Mr. Super High School Level Good Luck himself.”

CHAPTER 3

“No, I’m used to this bad luck now...” Naegi-kun said, letting another bitter expression appear on his face.

Claiming to be ‘Super High School Level Good Luck’ then saying he’s ‘used to his bad luck’, somehow it seems like he has a really unreliable talent - *what a strange guy*.

He’s strange - I don’t think I could find a word that suited him more than that.

That’s it, he’s just a strange guy.

He’s such an ordinarily ordinary guy, he’s strange.

According to my notebook, all students at Hope’s Peak Academy are motivated and look towards the future, they are highly competitive and overflowing with ambition. They’re brimming with hope - if it were me in his situation, I’d end up feeling bad - I guess.

But it didn’t seem to be the case with him. That might be the reason why I think he’s so strange. Naegi-kun suddenly interrupted my train of thought.

“But if that’s true...”

“... Eh?” Without realising it, I asked him to repeat himself. “If what’s true?”

“Eh? I-It’s nothing... It’s not important!” He replied hurriedly, it seemed like he was just talking to himself earlier.

“If it’s not important then you can tell me. What do you mean by if that’s true?” I ended up responding with an uncharacteristically strong tone of voice. Somehow, this guy’s entire nature and attitude makes him strange. “Hey, tell me already! If it’s not important then you should tell me. I’m right, aren’t I? Hurry up and reply!”

“Ok-okay...”

“You should only reply with ‘okay’ once. I’m not your teacher!”

“... I only said it once, didn’t I?”

Huh, really? I’ve already forgotten.

“Whatever! Just hurry up and tell me! If you don’t tell me already, I’ll end up forgetting what it is you’re telling me!”

“Well, you see... I’ve only heard a rumour, so I’m not sure if I can believe it... but I thought it might be true...”

“... A rumour?” I once again raised my finger towards him, pointing it only a few centimetres away from his forehead. “Was it rumour about me? I won’t stand for any awful rumours out there tainting my good name!”

“N-No, no! It’s nothing like that!”

“So then, what sort of rumour is it?”

“Um, i-it’s...” Naegi-kun looked away from me before hesitantly continuing, “...the rumour said there’s student that’s become forgetful...”

“Become... forgetful...?” Somehow I couldn’t say anymore. Any knowledge of stringing a sentence together had mysteriously disappeared. I was planning to ask him if he knew me before I became forgetful -

“Ah!” I suddenly raised my voice. I shuddered as if I had been hit by a thunderbolt.

“W-What’s wrong...” Naegi-kun turned to me again with a worried expression. I quickly opened ‘Otonashi Ryouko’s Memory Notebook’ again and flipped through the pages, and flipped, and flipped, and flipped-

I saw a light that blinded my eyes for a moment. There was an explosion. The memories in my notebook and a flash of inspiration collided together and caused a violent chemical reaction.

Sandwiched in my notebook was a single letter.

*Dear Super High School Level Idiotic Forgetful girl,
I’m the one who took all your precious “past memories” that you so carefully wrote down. They’re filled to the brim with “memories” of that Matsuda Yasuke. The past carries a lot of weight, doesn’t it? Doesn’t it? Am I right? It does...*

“Hey, earlier you said a student had ‘become forgetful’, didn’t you?” I was overtaken by an immense excitement as I stood up. “So then the students here know about me before I became forgetful? You too, right? You also knew me before I was forgetful? Speak up!”

“C-Calm down!” Naegi-kun desperately tried to settle me down. “I don’t really know but... it seems like it was due to some sort of illness, but I wasn’t really paying too much attention... since I’m not really all that good at talking to people...”

“It’s fine, just hurry up and tell me! Did you know me before I was forgetful? Did you?”

“Um... well, that’s...”

“Go on!”

“... Y-Yeah” He finally gave a small nod.

“I... I knew it...” I confirmed to myself.

The students at this school knew me before I had become forgetful - that means I had become forgetful after coming to this school. So then, what about that blackmail Enoshima Junko had written to me about my ‘past memories’? Did I really ever have such an important ‘memory notebook’? No, maybe it was all just a trap so she could get me to cooperate with her.

In other words, a lie.

So then, what else did she say? Let’s see, she told me she killed someone in the central plaza, she also told me that I had to kill Matsuda-kun. In the first place, does a person like Enoshima Junko even exist-

As my thoughts circled through my head, I tried to remain focused on my notebook. ‘Lie’ and ‘Enoshima Junko’ were the two key phrases that were becoming more apparent. The words written on the page started to swirl around my mind. They gradually grew faster, swirling, turning, circling, they mixed and mingled together. For some reason, the depths of my head began to tingle. It was a strange tingling feeling.

This sensation is...

Huh? I feel like I’m remembering something...

“Hey...” An annoying voice came pounding into my thoughts. It was Naegi-kun’s voice. He didn’t seem bothered by anything. I stopped concentrating on my notebook. I think I can almost remember it...

“Hey...”

Shut up!

“H-Hey...”

Argh, come on! I’m trying to concentrate here!

“Hey... !”

“Would you shut up already?!” I shouted at him and raised my face from my notebook - I froze.

I saw an unfamiliar man standing in front of us.

... Eh, who is that?

He grabbed Naegi-kun’s shoulders. He wore an unfamiliar school uniform and had unfamiliar long hair. His pitch black silhouette was vastly different to his ghostly white face. Piercing eyes, similar to a reptile’s had been carved into his face.

Our eyes met for a brief moment - a siren inside my head rang out, informing me of the dire emergency. I felt like I was having a heart attack as I felt my chest pound faster.

“H-Hey...” Naegi-kun’s face looked shocked, his entire body had gone stiff and he opened his mouth. “H-He came in after us, do you know him? If you do, by chance, know him... could you do me a favour and tell him to let go of me... ?”

“U-Unfortunately, it seems like I’ve got no idea who he is...” I answered him.

“Oy, what was that?” The strange man growled in a low voice. “Don’t tell me you’ve forgotten me already? That’s a little... harsh, isn’t it?”

“... Y-You really do know him?” Naegi-kun asked in a puzzled voice, the man’s eyes drifted down to him suspiciously.

“Whether we have met before or whether it is simply fate... neither are of any concern to you. You’ve just been caught up in it all. In the end you just have bad luck.”

I quickly dropped my line of sight to my notebook, and looked for any memories about this stranger - there was only one person who came to mind.

“Could you be... Madarai Isshiki-san?”

“... That’s right. Late that night in the central plaza I, Madarai, was killed by my own target.”

“Killed... by your own target?” Despite what he said, he looked completely uninjured to me -

“I am immortal.”

“... Eh?”

The man sensed my doubts, he smiled broadly and chuckled strangely.

Immortal?

What is this? A fantasy based novel?

“Um... you’re not being serious, are you?”

“You’re sure about that?”

“Erm... What do you mean?”

“I’m truly immortal. If I were not, I would be unable to explain how I am now uninjured...”

“Well I’m not sure about that, but how did you just change the genre to something like a war based game...”

“Um, can I speak for a moment?” Naegi-kun cut in. “T-The guy who came in after us... Madarai-san, was it? Um... if you are Madarai-san, you couldn’t mean you’re Madarai-san from the student council?”

“Eh, student council?” I said without thinking.

Somehow, I could not see this creepy man dressed in all black, in the student council.

“Hmmm, I see. The boy knows...” Madarai grimaced and closed his eyes before murmuring something. “... That’s right. I’m a survivor from the student council.”

“S-Survivor?”

“... You’re still pretending to be innocent after so long?”

Madarai opened his eyes, and stared at me carefully.

“It’s because of ‘that incident’ all this happened. That incident is the reason behind the state of the student council now. I had luckily escaped with my life but everyone else had...”

No, that’s not it - Madarai shook his head, as if trying to disprove his own words.

“... Perhaps it’s wrong for me to say it was lucky I survived. It’s more correct to say I simply remained alive. Yes, that’s it, I luckily remained alive. I was not even given the chance to fight... and for that, I shall not just forgive them. I will absolutely not forgive them of stealing my chance to protect the student council. Who was it? Who did it?”

Madarai spat out as he clenched his hands around Naegi-kun’s shoulders. The boys face distorted with pain, but he still attempted to object, despite his discomfort.

“E-Excuse me, I don’t really know the details but... I understand you feel angry about what happened to the student council... and I understand that you hate the person who did this, but I think it might be good to instead consider rebuilding the student council before anything else...”

“Rebuild it? Me?” Madarai scoffed, “Nah. In the first place, why do you even think someone like me belongs in the student council?”

“..... Eh?”

“I was only elected so the other members would be able to relax. After all, I’m only the ‘Super High School Level Bodyguard’. I did what I could for the student council. In the past, now, and forever, I am just ‘a protector’. That’s all...” I heard Madarai grind his teeth, his voice was filled with bitter hatred. “During that... time of emergency, I was not fit to help them. I wasn’t even a target during the incident. Perhaps the criminal did not consider me to be a member of the student council? Can you even imagine how humiliating this has been for me? I wasn’t even given a chance to utilize my own talent. The feeling I had from having my own talent trampled on was... Oy, you bastards better be imagining what it felt like so you can relate....”

Madarai gripped Naegi-kun’s shoulders even more tightly. The pain the young man felt only increased, and he yelled out.

“... Now I can only protect the remaining dignity of the student council. It will not end until I’ve atoned for the student council... I must confront it. That’s why I must exact revenge. I am no longer able to slack off. I am willing to do... anything.”

The man’s eyes were stained red, not focusing on anything anymore. In any case the man seemed completely settled on the idea of pushing his point.

“I d-don’t... know anything about what happened...” I ended up trying to excuse myself for whatever actions I did. I felt an overwhelming fear come over me as I desperately tried to make an excuse to run away. “I d-don’t have anything to do with the student council or know anything about any incidents that happened... or anything dangerous of that sort at all... I-I’m just an innocent bystander!”

“As if...” Madarai disagreed, he sounded like he was making a death threat to his worst enemy. “We talked about it earlier. You know all about that incident.”

“I r-really don’t know anything about it! If you think I’m lying... then please look at this notebook!” I opened ‘Otonashi Ryouko’s Memory Notebook’ and waved it in front of Madarai. “I haven’t written anything in here about it! This is my proof! I don’t know anything about it and I have nothing to do with it!”

“Would you cut the crap already?” A voice overflowing with fury pierced through my notebook to me. “That notebook of yours doesn’t prove anything... why are you hiding the truth? Are you the criminal’s apprentice? Can’t talk about it? Or maybe you’re really-”

“I s-said I have nothing to do with it!” I suddenly screamed at him. I instantly regretted doing so. I only added fuel to the fire. I thought he’d be really angry at me... but it seems like my prediction was way off mark, in fact his face was surprisingly blank.

“.....” His emotions had flatlined, he didn’t even blink. Any concept of time around the man had come to a complete stop. Naegi-kun sensed Madarai’s malice and looked behind him timidly. “..... Come to think of it, I haven’t heard this boy’s name yet, have I?” He remained expressionless, only his mouth moving.

“I-I’m... Naegi Makoto...”

Hearing that, Madarai laughed softly and leaned down to speak in Naegi-kun’s ear.

“Say, Naegi-kun. Were you listening to what I was saying before?”



“... Huh?”

Madarai suddenly released Naegi-kun's shoulders only to place both of his hands on either side of Naegi-kun's head.

“Ah... !!” Naegi-kun's face instantly morphed into a terrified expression.

“I said earlier, didn't I? I am willing to do anything for vengeance.” Madarai looked like a demon as he opened his mouth - he smiled and laughed, his voice full of poisonous venom.

This is bad. That guy is incredibly dangerous!

Somehow, I was only left with the ability to shiver and tremble like a frightened little bunny - I have no choice but to make a run for it... and quick!

CHAPTER 3

“You're not thinking of running, are you?”

“... Eh?” My foot suddenly stopped in midair.

“If you do that... what do you think will happen to this boy here?”

“... Eh? Eh?” As I heard this, Naegi-kun's face changed from blue to white. *Wow, what a colourful face he has!*

“This is the last warning you get... so watch yourself. If you don't obey me, this guy's head will be tragically crushed in an unfortunate accident.”

“Wh-what the...” I could only feel confused, both of them looked at me.

Say something - Madarai's stare intimidated me, like he was about to do something reckless.

Help me - Naegi-kun's eyes pleaded to me.

Intimidating eyes and pleading eyes.

Both were entirely focused on me and...

What a bother.

It was a bother to go to the hassle of doing either. There's nothing I would really be able to do, or wanted to do, I guess. That's why for me this was something that had...

"Nothing to do with me..."

That's right, it has nothing to do with me. Sure, I happened to be swept along with the current, but that's all, I wasn't involved with the creation of this situation at all. I don't even know anything about what happened, that's why it has...

"Nothingtodowithmenothingtodowithmenothingtodowithmenothingtodowithmenothingtodowithmenothingtodowithme..." I mumbled quietly, reminding the people in front of me, as well as just myself. I was mumbling my magical enchantment.

"Huh?"

"Huh?" Having heard that, both Madarai and Naegi-kun looked at me with vacant expressions.

"What do you mean by it has nothing to do with you...?" A confused Madarai raised his voice. "There's no way you're not involved... after it's your fault this boy here has been caught up in all this."

"You're wrong," I found myself replying flatly, "I'm not the reason as to why he became involved in this whole thing, he got himself involved, it's not my fault he has god-awful luck. In the end I really have nothing to do with this."

"H-Hey, wait a-" As Naegi-kun tried to interrupt me I raised my voice to continue my argument.

"It's a shame, but it's obvious Naegi-kun has no luck at all," I said in the calmest tone I could muster, "He just has an insane power to take and give life because of his complete lack of luck. So, I think you have no choice but to give up."

Anyway, no matter what the case is, I've already forgotten. After all, I forget everything sooner or later, with the exception of Matsuda-kun. So, as far as I see it, there's not really much out there that actually does have anything to do with me - I continued to mutter to myself these words, in all truth I really had nothing to do with it.

Then I'll forget that too. My brief meeting with Naegi-kun, the information he knew, I'll forget that as well. There's no reason for me to feel bad about him. So that's why I always say this has nothing to do with me.

"... Have you decided what you're going to do?"

“I don’t know. I keep telling you this has nothing to do with me.” I answered blankly.

“Is that so? I see,” Madarai bared his teeth, murmuring in a low voice, “I hope you’re prepared to see the extent of my resolution.”

There really are strange people who are ready to go as far as to kill another human in order to prove their point. It’s insane to think he would accomplish anything by killing Naegi-kun.

Naegi-kun really doesn’t have any luck.

He’s gotten himself into a hostage situation after all.

“This is the end.” Madarai gripped Naegi-kun’s skull with all the strength in his hands and-

“... You’re wrong!” A voice resounded throughout the room that seemed to dissolve the tension in the air. A crazy person ran into the lab. The figure appeared to slide towards Madarai, and hammered the back of their fist into the man’s nose, making it bend to a strange angle. Madarai squinted his eyes shut in pain. He seemed to lose sight of his attacker as he fell down.

After giving Madarai’s chest a prod the stranger turned to Naegi-kun and grasped his head in their hands before moving to pick Naegi-kun up. They placed him gently on top of the bed and turned around - Madarai flew towards them. The stranger gracefully roundhouse kicked and hit Madarai square on the chin. The blow completely smashed his keypoint and rocked his head violently, he fell the the ground, having no energy left.

By the way, this scene I just witnessed, it passed in the blink of an eye. The stranger skillfully landed without making a sound after they finished their kick. Their skirt gently floated down - oh, they’re a she?

“I-Ikusaba-san!” Naegi-kun called out from the bed in relief.

Ikusaba-san - it seems like that is this girl’s name. Of course, this is the first time I’ve heard her name.

Naegi-kun got up from the bed and ran hurriedly to the girl.

“T-thank you, Ikusaba-san! Thank you so much!” He said, thanking her over and over again. However, the girl remained completely calmed and composed in response. Well I say calm and composed, but I think it’s more like she just didn’t feel anything.

“I was only helping my classmate...” she mumbled quietly to herself. Stubbornly, Ikusaba-san avoided his gaze. But it’s odd, looking at her now, you wouldn’t guess she had just been fighting brilliantly only a few moments beforehand.

“Ah... but Ikusaba-san, why are you here?”

I must admit I was wondering the same thing, usually it’s only Matsuda-kun in this lab - that’s what I had written down in my notes, also it seems like he’s absent today, but he has been getting a multitude of visitors. Maybe he’s been working on something big?

“Oh... um...” Ikusaba-san raised her voice slightly, but it was barely above a whisper, I listened carefully. “... I was just passing by?”

“Eh, why’d you phrase it as a question?” I asked without thinking.

“... Ikusaba-san, you haven’t changed one bit,” Naegi-kun interrupted. “... So then, you were just passing by when you came across what was happening and you came to save us, right?” Ikusaba-san nodded in response.

“That’s it... and you saved me. I was getting worried for a moment there... Thank you, Ikusaba-san. Thank you so much!” Naegi-kun sighed a breath of relief and continued to repeat his sincere thanks, much to Ikusaba-san’s embarrassment.

“I was really lucky... you were just passing by... I was so lucky...”

Luck - somehow that was how we were saved. Pure luck. But that is only in a manner of speaking. All thanks to such a strong person who was passing by we were able to escape from such a predicament but...

This luck was really convenient and good.

On the other hand though, Madarai’s actions were inconvenient to say the least.

Ah, so this is Super High School Level Good Luck?

But if it is luck, I can’t help but feel that it was all because of it that we were caught up in all this.

“Excuse me.”

“... Eh?” I suddenly realized Ikusaba-san was standing right in front of me.

“AWAWAWA!!” I leapt back without thinking. Now that I think about it, did I really not notice her? Did she teleport?

“.....” For some reason Ikusaba remained silent.

“.....” I waited for her to show any signs of opening her mouth to speak, but I ended up giving in and raising my own voice.

“Um, nice to meet you... thank you very much for earlier.”

“Eh?” Naegi-kun raised his voice in surprise. He walked to us, invading our line of sight as he blinked in surprise - But what was so surprising?

“... I’m Ikusaba Mukuro” I tilted my head to the side slightly, in response, Ikusaba-san raised her voice a little more, “I’m the ‘Super High School Level Soldier’ from the 78th batch... Nice to meet you.” Without even blinking, she moved her mouth as little as possible as she introduced herself. The moment she finished she returned to utter silence.

“.....”

Speaking honestly, she seemed like a quiet girl by nature. Then again, she is a Super High School Level Soldier, she probably acts like this around everyone - perhaps every soldier is like this? However I haven’t met any members of the military before so I have no way of knowing. I just don’t know...

“.....” I was in silence with her.

“.....” Even Naegi-kun was silent, but he was as puzzled as before.

“.....” Madarai, still foaming at the mouth was, of course, silent too.

Everyone was silent.

An awkward silence.

But the awkwardness didn’t last long. After some time, I forgot about the awkward silence. Instead, another thought wandered into my mind.

Ah, now that I think about it, Matsuda-kun isn’t here.

That’s right. The only thing I can ever remember is Matsuda-kun.

I wonder if Matsuda-kun is on an errand.

I want to see him soon. I hope he comes back quickly.

My thoughts continued as I stared into space and-

“.....!” The girl crouched down suddenly... Um, I think her name was Ikusaba-san.

“W-What’s wrong?” The surprised boy, Erm, Naegi-kun I think, asked. The girl replied in a warning tone.

“... Someone’s there.” The atmosphere of the lab became much more tense.

“Eh? Hiding...?”

“Sorry for interrupting. I wasn’t trying to hide! But you shouldn’t spread rumours about people!” A voice rose and everyone instinctively looked around the lab.

“... Huh?” But no matter how hard we looked, there wasn’t anyone there.

“No, I’m here! Look look, over here!”

“Eh? W-Where...?” Feeling somewhat panicked I continued looking around the room restlessly.

“O-Over there!” Naegi-kun pointed out, Ikusaba-san walked to the laboratory door.

“Ah!” I noticed a little later than the others, in front of the door stood a boy with a pure, innocent face.

“Oh, you finally noticed me?” The boy’s face lacked any distinctive features, his voice also had a complete lack of any unique tones. “It took you a little while but you noticed me in the end... Well, it’s my talents fault so it can’t be helped... I’ll forgive you.”

“W-Why’s there a kid here?!” Naegi-kun suddenly said, taken aback by the boy.

“Hey, hey, you shouldn’t treat me like I’m a kid. I don’t think it’s rare to see someone with a baby face but I’m a meritorious high school student at Hope’s Peak Academy! I even went to the trouble of using a difficult word, like ‘meritorious’... oh, what’s all this then?” The boy’s line of sight fell to where Madarai was, “Oh my, oh my... looks like you’ve gotten yourselves into quite a mess...”

“Ah! Y-You’re wrong about that!” Naegi-kun quickly ran in between the boy and Madarai, trying to obstruct his view, “H-How to put it... it might look like a slight accident but...”

The boy patted his hand on Naegi-kun’s shoulder.

“Ah, don’t fret. There’s no need to make excuses around me. I’m actually also investigating this case... Isn’t that right, big sis?”

“Eh?” Despite having the reigns of his great story handed over to me, I didn’t remember anything about it at all. I wasn’t able to muster any more than, “I guess so?” and tilt my head to the side.

“... Huh? Don’t tell me, you’ve forgotten about me again?” he folded his arms and nodded happily, “Well, I’m used to people forgetting who I am so it’s fine. It’s just another side-effect of my talent. Look, I said I have no presence, didn’t I? People don’t notice me very often, and they say that they forgot about me a lot... but you know, Big Sis,” The boy started rubbing his hands and raised his voice again, “I have a request that this time when I say my name you remember it! My name is Kamishiro Yuuto! I’m a “Super High School Level Spy” from the 77th batch!”

“W-Wait... a second...” I protested as the boy came closer to me, I opened up ‘Otonashi Ryouko’s Memory Notebook’ and tried to quickly find any memories mentioning the boy, “Ah, I got it! Kamishiro-kun! I remember you! Kamishiro-kun with absolutely no unique features whatsoever!”

“I wouldn’t say none...” murmured Ikusaba-san with a neutral expression, “He looks like a doll made by someone with the creativeness of a politician, he gives off bad vibes...” I didn’t think she was the type to say things so bluntly.

Kamishiro-kun glared at Ikusaba-san for a moment before returning his stare to me and then said in a very over-the-top voice.

“Weeeeell then!! It’s really awful that you’re so forgetful, big sis! When you first told me I thought you were joking I almost laughed, haha!”

“W-Wait... That isn’t something you should confess in front of a person... !!” having heard him, Naegi-kun quickly interjected but Kamishiro-kun payed him no mind.

“Ahaha, I don’t need to be careful. I’ve always thought being careful was for losers. But, I don’t think you have any experience with that, do you, big bro... you see, I understand completely,” Kamishiro-kun slipped past Naegi-kun and stood in front of me and made sure we were face to face before saying any more, “You really are amazingly forgetful.

saying such ditzy things don't really fit you, but I like it. Actually, there are a lot of girls out there who have ditzy personalities now that I think about it... in fact, my equipment down below gets a little harder just talking about them!"

We all blinked in surprise. The culprit was of course the blunt explicit adult joke.

"Well, in any case she's my client so I'm genuinely relieved to see nothing happened to her. But, in the end..." Kamishiro-kun turned his line of sight back to Madarai, "No matter how much I think about it, I can't decide if this is a bad situation or not. I thought it really was. You know, they say my personality is warm and friendly enough to melt all the ice cream in a convenience store, though I suppose something like that is more of a pet peeve to some." *I honestly can't make sense of this last bit.*

"Erm, I think m-maybe it was overkill..." Naegi-kun once again began to apologise about this situation, "How to put it... perhaps it's better to say it was self-defence..."

"That's not what I meant." Kamishiro-kun said hitting him lightly, he slowly walked over to Madarai's body and mumbled to himself, "Honestly, talk about a worst case scenario... well, it won't solve anything anyhow. But when he wakes up, will you resort to violence again? What will you do? You can't just leave him here now can you?"

"Well... if we all go to the security department and explained-"

"We can't do that, big bro," He stared at Naegi-kun, analyzing him, "You do know I came all the way here just so I could have an important talk to big sis, my client? You understand? It's an important talk, got it? What I'm trying to say is we're too busy!"

"U-Um... but..." Naegi-kun was completely overpowered by Kamishiro-kun's icy-cold stare.

Unexpectedly, a voice sounded out throughout the room.

"I'll do something about it..." Everyone turned to look at Ikusaba-san. The girl quickly lowered her gaze to the ground and repeated herself, "I-I'll do something about it..."

"And you can do it by yourself?" Kamishiro-kun asked, drawing closer to her. The girl nodded. "The heck, do you even understand me!" The next moment, Kamishiro-kun's eyes sparkled brightly, "I see, I see. I get it now! You can take care of all this by yourself? Hm, hm, hearing that really puts my mind to ease! Ah, by the way, it would be better not to mention this to the security department. Since it'll be difficult to deal with them."

"W-Wait a second!" Naegi-kun interrupted him again. "If we don't properly explain the situation, Ikusaba-san will be blamed."

“Huh?” Kamishiro-kun remained staring intently at Naegi-kun. I couldn’t imagine his young face anymore and felt myself get hot, Naegi-kun remained dead silent. “You still don’t get me even though I’ve said it a million times already? Big sis and I are busy. We have no time to help you clear this up. You side characters can go ahead and do it without our permission. In the first place, since you are the guys resorted to such a violent solution, it makes you the bad guys. If it were me, I would have done a much better job.”

He continued to prattle on about his self importance. Naegi-kun could find any words to reply with but somehow he had not yet lost his head.

Ikusaba-san murmured a little more.

“It’s okay... I’ll do something about it so...”

“I-Ikusaba-san!”

“.... It’s fine,” with a short sentence, Ikusaba-san managed to silence the worrying Naegi-kun.

Kamishiro-kun and I turned to one another and he muttered, “It might be good to head off now...”

“Well then, it’s decided!” Kamishiro-kun had an innocent smile on his face and he clapped his hands happily. “Leave the job to big sis over there... idiotic big sis and I are gonna go somewhere else!”

Kamishiro-kun grabbed my hand and with a quick, “Yay, let’s go, let’s go!” he started acting like a child dragging his poor parents to the toy store.

“W... Wait a mo-”

“It’s fine, it’s fine! You want to go back to your peaceful old life, don’t you, big sis? So you should just quieten down and come with me!” Kamishiro-kun continued dragging me along behind him until we reached the door of the lab, I looked back hopelessly. The ever expressionless Ikusaba-san and Naegi-kun looking worried again stood up.

Naegi-kun took a single step. He had a look of determination. He quickly became startled however - Ikusaba-san had laid her hand on his shoulder. He looked back to her, she warned him and nodded softly. Seeing that Naegi-kun seemed to give in, relaxing his shoulders. He turned to look at me once more - the two figures disappeared in the distance.

“Now then, let’s move on and do our beeeeeest!!” The moment we entered the hallway, Kamishiro-kun excitedly cheered. “Let’s solve your probleeeem!!”

Kamishiro-kun continued to walk, leaving me behind.

“... Ah, wait for me!” I called out as I hurriedly ran after him - but, my mind was drifting elsewhere.

I was thinking about Naegi-kun looking at me for that last moment. His eyes sent me a burning feeling of unease. The individual named Naegi Makoto gave me a sense of unreliability and had a weak demeanor - but in the depths of his eyes at that moment, there was an incredible strength from his very core that shook all my previous preconceptions of who this person was. He looked at me with a dazzling aura. Whether there was a problem, whether he had an unbeatable enemy, he always would have a strength so strong he could never give up.

Such an unforeseeable person looked straight at me with those eyes. I don’t understand how I can feel this way around such a strange, mysterious force. However, I doubt I’ll ever need to know. After all, he has nothing to do with me, but that’s not just a reason I’m using because it suits me, I just feel as though he basically has nothing to do with me. For example, as if we were in alternate dimensions, surely Naegi-kun’s story and my own story will never cross paths again. In conclusion we have nothing to do with each other.

I felt like that for some reason.

So, I’ll forget that boy with a reason, that was what I had concluded as I walked down the biology building hallways.

In fact, in just a matter of minutes - I completely forgot of his existence.

CHAPTER 4

Red eyes.

The whites of the eyes seemed almost painted red. The eyes turned towards their companion, Matsuda Yasuke muttered a questioned.

“... How long have you been conscious?”

After blinking for a strangely long time, the person on the bed - ‘Super High School Level Student Council President’, Murasame Soushun opened his mouth slowly. His lips were parched and made a dry sound as he opened his mouth.

“... Always,” His voice was quiet and hoarse. He sounded like a completely different person in comparison to before.

“So that’s how it’s been...” Matsuda let a grin creep into his expression. He turned to his friend showing a friendly smile. “But don’t you think it’s stupid to trick me like that?”

However Murasame did not make a sound. His eyes showed no emotion as he stared at Matsuda. Matsuda continued in his joking tone to help calm the tense atmosphere.

“It must have taken a lot of acting on your part. Your actual physiological symptoms and echos of such have almost completely disappeared... yet you were easily able to cease being a normal person. We wouldn’t have been in this situation had I not seen through your act.”

“Why did you come?” But his reply almost came with a violent attitude.

As if giving up, Matsuda’s expression returned to a more sober look.

“You said that earlier. You asked those ancient artifacts from the steering committee that. I want you to find out... whether you really woke up or not.”

In response Murasame only looked away, redirecting his attention to the ceiling and blinking without meaning.

“To be honest... even I’m having my doubts...” Matsuda licked his dry lips before continuing, “What if... I told those people that you’re awake?”

Murasame remained silent to Matsuda’s questioning. Like a remote controlled car with a flat battery, his reactions were slow and sluggish at best.

Maybe it isn’t just acting.

Matsuda breathed out a deep sigh - he just answered his own question.

“Still, I’m sure the news will surprise them. After that... I already guessed what would happen. Didn’t they used to say when people needed to prepare for the worst... ‘Desperate times call for desperate measures’? At the moment they’re relying entirely on influential people outside the school to cover up this incident,” Matsuda looked away from Murasame and slowly gazed at his surroundings. Instead of looking for some kind of reaction from Murasame, he turned to the surrounding electronic equipment, as if trying to communicate with it, “After all... they can’t afford to make up excuses for this. Like allowing a known threat into the general public, they can’t just pretend there’s no

danger. There are also people who say who say a ruthless person cannot be a good researcher... well, not that it matters. It depends on how much talent there is."

Matsuda stayed talkative and Murasame didn't even shift an eyebrow. Murasame Soushun used to be the kind of person who would at least pretend to laugh no matter how bad the joke was - it seemed like that man was no longer there.

The issue isn't that he's feeling depressed.

As Matsuda sighed, he brushed his hair out of his face. His long, narrow eyes looked sharply at Murasame.

"Oy, Murasame. This isn't a bargaining point, but I do want to tell you... I'm saying this to make sure you understand, the school's intentions and the steering committee's intentions are very different. To be truthful, I don't care what those guys think. I just want to know what the hell is happening at this school. So then I-

"I'm just pretending..." Murasame suddenly opened his mouth. Matsuda saw him smile - or maybe he imagined it. In the next moment, any trace of it had completely disappeared. The reaction he just gave him, proved that good person was still there.

There might be some more to this.

Matsuda took off his jacket and untucked his worn out white shirt, returning to his more familiar appearance. It wasn't because he had become more relaxed. If anything it was just the opposite. It felt more like he was just getting down to business.

"I get it, I don't think you'll be able to escape by just using this act. Even though you're in this state, you're still worried about this school... and you're willing to fight for it? That's why you're using this act, so you can escape from the eyes of the steering committee?"

Matsuda sat down on the bed, and leaned in to say something.

"If I were you, I'd be trying to get used to this kind of power. I'll protect you if I have to. Once I give my false report to those guys, you might even be able to fight along with them. Since it's not always that bad to fight alongside the bad guys..."

Matsuda once again asked how Murasame's condition was - only to see Murasame would not reply or react.

"No matter what the force behind it is, I still don't know very much about the incident. That's why I need you to survive and explain it to me, but..." Murasame lowered his

eyelids slightly - At the very least, from what Matsuda could gather, his slight movement meant refusal. Matsuda thought this would be the case but he had a more pressing question. Though he didn't particularly want to hear the answer which may be given, because it was something he had been told before.

"The culprit is... Kamukura Izuru, correct?" That was his question, "I heard about it from the staff members, the name of the person who survived the incident and then went missing afterwards is called Kamukura Izuru. But, does that person... really exist?"

After a short silence, Murasame finally opened his mouth.

"Kamukura Izuru... killed the... student council..." His voice was hoarse and unused, but he conveyed his message.

"... So then, Kamukura Izuru is real?" Matsuda listened for confirmation however Murasame didn't reply. His mouth remained open, stiff and unmoving.

"Oy, Murasame..." Matsuda called out, urging him on, the boy's mouth finally moved again.

"... Whatever." He finished saying only that. Matsuda sensed something from his word.

So then, that doesn't matter.

There was no sense of crisis in the Hope's Peak Academy Murasame held onto. So then it isn't a known fact whether Kamukura Izuru is the culprit behind the incident or not.

Matsuda's thoughts went along the lines of, 'That must be it!'

There was one more thing Matsuda needed to hear above all else - he had realized.

He breathed in heavily and before giving himself a chance to hesitate, he asked his question.

"What about Enoshima Junko? What connection does she have to the incident?"

Murasame closed his eyes. It was a blink that seemed to last forever. The next moment he opened his eyes again - his face was unfamiliar.

Tears were threatening to spill from his open eyes, he made a gritting sound with his teeth bared. His crazed expression turned into one of pure exhaustion.

Then Matsuda realized.

“KILL! KILL! KILL! KILL! KILL! KILL! KILL! KILL! KILL! KILL! KILL! KILL!
KILL! KILL! KILL! KILL! KILL! KILL!” He kept screaming and yelling, over and over
again he continued to scream.

As ‘that thing’ screamed with his entire body, Matsuda began to feel a little cold. It wasn’t that he was composed. That feeling was lost, it was as if his body temperature itself had dropped.

He already understood everything.

He already understood everything about The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope's Peak Academy's History.

Murasame Soushun's true enemy and Hope's Peak Academy's true enemy was, most likely, Enoshima Junko.

That was his conclusion, he had already guessed it as the worst case scenario.

Matsuda had no choice but to establish his despair-inducing resolve.

So then, I'm out of options.

I passed the point of no return a long time ago.

Something around his lower abdomen begun to bubble and boil. Still hot, his whole body became energetic. Matsuda turned to Murasame.

“Hey... I said earlier that I’d protect you if I had to, didn’t I?” He spoke in a calm tone of voice, “But, there’s also someone else I have to protect at all costs. They’re hopeless if I don’t protect them... So, I’ve decided I’ll sacrifice anything to protect them.”

As the words left his mouth, they were swallowed by screams. Even so, Matsuda continued to talk.

“... I’m awful. I don’t particularly want to think about that. If I forgot the person I care for and if they died... that thought is unbearable... So I’ll protect them. No matter what happens I’ll protect them.”

As Matsuda spoke softly, he placed both of his hands around ‘that thing’s neck.

[illegible]

Even so ‘that thing’ continued to shout out. He didn’t seem to understand what was happening.

If there’s a grudge against me for this, then there’s a grudge against me.

Matsuda closed his eyes, and thought to himself.

I don’t mean that person, I mean I’ll hold a grudge against myself.

In the next moment, Matsuda gathered all his power into his hands and squeezed.

Finally the incredibly loud voice, the screams of ‘that thing’ had come to a stop.

The bed to which he was assigned started to shake with a loud rattling sound.

Matsuda was leaning forward, his hair falling in front of his eyes. However he didn’t loosen his grip. Instead he tightened it, he put all his power into his hands.

Quickly, the bed’s shaking subsided. The feeling of what his hands were wrapped around disappeared.

The feeling of ‘that thing’ ending.

After a while, Matsuda finally opened his eyes again. All the muscles in his body felt exhausted and tense, as if he had become a solid piece of iron. Sweat dripped from his forehead, landing on his long eyelashes.

He blankly turned his line of sight towards ‘that thing’ on top of the bed. The light from those eyes had disappeared - all that was left was a deep darkness.

Those eyes held a darkness deeper than the colour of darkness itself.

CHAPTER 5

In one of the East District’s cafeteria’s.

It’s de facto name is “The Third School Cafeteria”. Although there are several cafeterias scattered throughout the campus, this is the most popular by far... apparently.

During noon, it’s filled not only students but also teaching staff lined up in a queue. It seems the secret behind the popularity of this cafeteria is the student they call ‘Super High School Level Cook’ who boasts of his own unique recipe. His food isn’t governed

by genre or common sense, and I hear it's so addictive you can't help but feel like it must contain drugs but-

Come to think of it, it doesn't really matter since I've forgotten how addictive it is.

Well, in any case! Even now the student cafeteria is filled with students so there wasn't a single seat available. For someone like me standing by myself, this atmosphere was anything but comfortable-

"I'm here too, you know!"

"Eh, did you hear me? Um..."

"I told you, I'm the 'Super High School Level Secret Agent' from the 77th batch, Kamishiro Yuuto! Come on!! How many times do I have to introduce myself?!" Kamishiro-kun said as he made a cross shape with his arms in front of me, "Damn it, it seems like we have bad chemistry, I was praying to god a lot that we'd be a good combination... too bad."

"What kind of god were you praying to...?"

In any case, it seems Kamishiro-kun and I certainly do have bad chemistry.

Forgettable Kamishiro-kun and forgetful me.

He was holding what looked to be a mixture of pale calpis and water.

"Well, whatever! What's more important is starting our conversation!"

"Right, we can do that but..." I looked around at the student's bustling through the cafeteria, "Why come here of all places?"

Kamishiro-kun waved his short finger in front of me with a *tsk tsk tsk*.

"It's bad taste to answer such a question to an outsider, if anything this is the perfect place for it. If we talked about this in a place with only a few people, someone would be able to overhear us easily. It's a theory I have that we should hide like we're extras in an adult video."

"So what you're saying is if we need to talk about something important, we should pretend we're having a normal chat."

"What I'm saying is, it'd be lonely if I was here by myself!"

Our casual conversation was buried in the sound of the hustle and bustle around us.

“See! No one cares about our conversation, do they?” Kamishiro-kun had a huge grin on his face like he had just committed some fantastic prank. He then moved onto the main topic, “There’s a reason why I wanted to talk to you as soon as possible... Did anyone go to your room this morning, big sis?”

“Eh? Did they?”

“It’s fine if you’ve forgotten. Just check in your notebook.”

Surprised, I did as I was told and took out ‘Otonashi Ryouko’s Memory Notebook’ and looked through it.

“... Ah!” I remembered in no time at all. I couldn’t help but yell out as I remembered. “I-I remember! I know, it was Enoshima Junko! That girl suddenly came into my room!”

“Huuuh.” Kamishiro suddenly leaned forward. “So then, that person really was Enoshima Junko. I knew it... yup, it seems like that wiretap I put in your room worked perfectly.”

Huh?

“Say, Kamishiro-kun?”

“Hm, what?”

“What did you say just now? Did you say... a wiretap?”

“Yeah I said that. I said wiretap. What about it?”

“... A wiretap?”

“Yes, it’s a common machine used for eavesdropping.”

I quickly stood from my chair.

“H-H-How is that normal?!” I screamed at the top of my lungs, “Normal, common people don’t use those machines!”

Kamishiro-kun’s face was as calm as ever.

“Let’s not rant on about the wiretap. It was crime prevention.”

“Wiretaps aren’t just used to prevent crimes!!”

“Ahaha, so you noticed! Clap, clap, clap!” As he verbally applauded me, he took out a giant paper bag from under his chair. The boy immediately shoved his hand into the bag and pulled out a sweet bread, “Ah, a Sugar Twist Doughnut!” As he cheered out by himself, he happily crammed it into his mouth.

“... That’s a little rude.”

“Hugha Fuwa Fughu.”

“I have no idea what you just said.”

Kamishiro-kun swallowed down the sweet bread that had been stuffed into his mouth.

“... I said, I don’t want you to misunderstand me, I didn’t just wiretap you, big sis. In a broader sense of speaking... I guess I wiretapped around this many people?” Kamishiro-kun held up all his fingers.

“Eeh! Ten people?!”

“Mmmm,” he shook his head, “A hundred people.”

“A... A hundred people!”

Each finger was to signify a unit of ten people!

“You can sit a hundred people on an Inaba Monooki shed no problem!”

(Inaba Monooki seems to be a Japanese storage company, Kamishiro just recited their catchphrase)

I was stunned at the unexpected amount of people he counted, he continued to explain the reason why.

“... The reason is, I rotate between girls a lot basically, that way I can have fun with you when best suits you with the time of month... I guess that’s why I like Heavy Rotation so much!” He puffed out his chest - No, that doesn’t matter!

“In any case, how did you manage to wiretap one hundred people’s rooms?”

“Ahaha, it’s easy with my ability. Sneaking into places like the girl’s toilets or their dressing room is a piece of cake!”

“Do something else with that piece of cake!”

“Making it nice and creamy, with extra cream!”

(This is all pretty confusing in English but he says doing things before breakfast in Japanese which is like saying it’s a piece of cake, so Otonashi tells him to do something else before breakfast. He then says something is growing but I’ve heard the word he said can be used for ejaculation...)

Aaaaah, this is already getting out of hand.

The hand, the leg, the head, the back - It’s getting out of everything.

“Let bygones be bygones,” the boy wiped away his problems with a simple phrase and started talking about a different subject, “When you big sisters are in a room you sure are noisy, aren’t you? Because of that I could barely hear any of the conversation... So, why did Enoshima Junko come visit you? She came because she had an errand for you to run, didn’t she?” As he said that, he took out another sweet bread, “Oh, a cub’s paw made in Germany!” He looked like he was tasting a rare delicacy as he munched on it.

“Uuum, well that’s...” My eyes dropped down to my notebook as I answered him, “It seems she came to give me a hint...”

“Hm? A hint?”

I flipped through my notebook.

“Erm... Enoshima Junko’s purpose...”

Kamishiro-kun looked surprised at my words.

“Tell me in more detail. What did Enoshima Junko say her purpose was?” Kamishiro-kun asked with a more forceful voice. I read aloud my memories from my notebook, also feeling very tense.

“It seems like... Enoshima Junko has two purposes... the first is, ‘To crush Kamukura Izuru until nothing is left’... do you know what that means?”

“Keep going.” He coldly prompted, I looked back down to my notebook.

“Um, the second is...”

I read on ahead a little - and was shocked by what I read.

It was as if someone had killed me by pounding my spine with a hammer, I felt a sudden, intense shock surge through my entire body.

“... Big sis?”

“W-What the hell... It says, ‘Kill your beloved darling, Matsuda Yasuke’...”

As soon as I said it, my brain felt like it was having a nuclear meltdown, my surroundings began to rock from side to side. It wasn’t an earthquake. I, myself, was the one shaking. My head felt hot, unavoidably so, only my body was cold. I was stricken by the less familiar feelings of fear and anger all at once. I was shaking violently for reasons I could not understand.

“... Calm down, big sis.”

The inside of my head was numb with fear, there was a voice echoing quietly. I was brought back to my senses to find Kamishiro-kun saying something to me.

“The kill thing has to be a bluff... There’s no way a person can kill so lightly. If she really planned to kill him, she wouldn’t bother declaring it to you until long after murdering him. Am I right?”

That would be true. I know that. But I can’t stop my body from shaking.

“Y-y-y-you’re r-r-r-right-t t-t-there’s-s n-n-n-no w-w-way s-s-s-s-she’d-d k-k-k-kill h-h-h-him.” My voice was shaking so much, I almost couldn’t form a single word.

“... In the meantime, it might be better for you to just not say anything until you calm down,” He said lazily as he gulped down the bread in his hand, “Instead, you should listen to my reasoning from now on,” He announced loudly, “Ooookay, let’s get a move on then!” Kamishiro-kun suddenly straightened his posture, enthusiastically - and he started the reasoning part, “Firstly, there’s the problem of ‘the advanced notice of Matsuda Yasuke’s death’ that you’re so worried about... I suppose that’s a bluff. I mean, there’s no sense in telling others about a murder you have yet to commit. She may have been using it as a threat, but that’s also unlikely... Hm, it’s definitely a bluff. For now, that’s our understanding of it. But... we should be more wary of the girl’s first purpose.”

Enoshima Junko’s first purpose.

That's certainly-

"No... Even so, 'Crushing Kamukura Izuru until nothing is left' is... honestly, even I was a little surprised. It's too much of a coincidence, I didn't think I'd hear Kamukura Izuru's name..."

"Wh-wh-who's-s-s t-t-t-that-t?"

"Did you ask, 'Who's that person'?" Kamishiro-kun patted his chest with his hand, "They're the culprit," The boy leaned forward, over the table, and spoke in an excited voice, "I was surprised! Since Kamukura Izuru is the culprit behind The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope's Peak Academy's History!"

Eh? The culprit behind The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope's Peak Academy's History?

Speaking of which, what is The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope's Peak Academy's History?

I tilted my head to the side.

"Wait! I can tell by your reaction that you don't remember!" Kamishiro huffed and pouted, "It's boring to show off my deductions to other big sisters... but from now on I should expect your reaction when I tell you my reasoning," Kamishiro-kun really did look bored as he exhaled deeply, then he began to talk again, "When I told you the other day... you didn't remember then either but... you didn't even bother to ask me whether The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope's Peak Academy's History really happened or not, did you? But now I can say that with more confidence," Kamishiro-kun clicked his fingers right in front of my eyes, "The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope's Peak Academy's History. Kamukura Izuru is the culprit behind the incident," He wore a proud expression as he declared it. After a while of wearing that expression he spoke again, "...That wasn't the reaction I was waiting for."

He said his one sided excuses, as I tried to regain my composure.

"The reason as to why I believe this is the case is also why I called this meeting," Kamishiro leaned over to face my ear and whispered in a small voice, "Actually, I overheard a conversation between faculty members..."

Overheard - somehow that filled me with a sense of dread.

"The people having the conversation were on school campus but they seemed to be very careful, they didn't mind spilling out all their complaints when in their own private rooms

though... like after a love affair, it was the no.1 most stale atmosphere. Honestly, those guys from office romances are scary.”

“Y-You don’t mean...!”

“Oh, it’s been a while since you last talked!”

Eh? Was it a while?

No, I wasn’t worried about that. More importantly-

“Oh my, As expected, I think the wiretap I installed in the female teaching staff’s room has been at least a little useful thus far. We should call this operation, ‘The Elite Female Staff Are Set Up With A Dilemma’! Ghuhahahaha!”

“I see... how nice.” Understandably, my reaction ended up seeming pretty idiotic.

“In any case, the pieces of the puzzle are starting to come together. The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope’s Peak Academy’s History, Kamukura Izuru and Enoshima Junko... Once we find what the connection between them is, we’ll be able to solve this case.”

“So then, it’ll only take a little longer?”

“Yeah, just a little...” Kamishiro-kun’s expression became shrouded, “Putting it another way, we just need to take one more step... here’s my prediction, once we connect one more piece all the secrets will be revealed. If that happens, we’ll understand soon afterwards...”

There’s only one piece left... ?

“So, are you going to talk to this Kamukura Izuru person? They’re the culprit, aren’t they?”

Kamishiro-kun made a troubled face, tilting his head to the side at my question.

“Hmmm, I don’t think I can. After all, no one knows where they are...”

“Don’t know where they are... So they’re missing?”

“I wouldn’t call it missing per se,” Kamishiro-kun’s face only became more and more troubled, his tone of voice became more serious, “The human named Kamukura Izuru isn’t a member of the regular school, the preparatory school or the teaching staff. In fact,

I can't find any mention of that person's name anywhere in Hope's Peak Academy... No boys, no girls, no student graduated or presently attending."

"...Huh?"

No mentions anywhere - it's like they're a ghost.

"I think the most likely possibility is... someone wiped out the record clean... what nasty business. I believe it would have been someone inside the school, but not someone within the inner workings of the school, it's too risky for them."

"So then... there's an accomplice within the school?"

"It's strange though, for as long I have investigated it, I haven't found a single student who knows who the person called Kamukura Izuru is. The school began hiding them after the incident, so it would not be strange if there were students who know about them before the incident... However, I never thought there would be no sign of their existence from the very beginning."

"N-No way... they really are a ghost..."

"S-Stop that! They're not anything like a ghost!" Kamishiro-kun puffed out his cheeks, he looked really mad. Evidently, he disliked the turn the conversation took, "A-Anyway..." Kamishiro-kun cleared his throat slightly, and readjusted his face to a more serious expression as he talked, "No matter what the reason is, if we don't find out who Kamukura Izuru is, we may have no choice but to give up..."

"G-Give up!" I suddenly raised my voice - Kamishiro-kun shook his finger in front of my face with another *tsk tsk tsk*.

"It's no good to jump to conclusions. As I was saying, we may have no choice but to give up coming at it from that perspective. If we can't figure it out from that perspective, It'll be better to come at it from a different perspective. It's stupid to always look at things from one point of view. For example, if you only ever look at a middle schooler's boobs, you'll never see her ass."

"I see! Thank goodness!" My reasonable reaction turned to an idiotic one and I replied overly cheerfully, "So, what's the other perspective?"

"Enoshima Junko of course!"

Enoshima Junko - we always return to that girl's name, I felt shivers go down my spine.

“Thanks to the conversation I overheard from the female staff, I finally understand. In what way Enoshima Junko is connected to The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope’s Peak Academy’s History,” Kamishiro-kun shot a quick glance to me - Checking my exceedingly weak reaction and he let out a large sigh, “It looks like you don’t remember but... other than being ‘the person who started the rumour of the incident’, it’s a mystery as to what other connection she has to The Worst, Largest Incident in Hope’s Peak Academy’s History. But it’s a mystery I’ve finally cracked. It seems, she’s the girl who discovered the incident.”

“Discovered it... but isn’t that suspicious?”

“Since this is a mystery novel, she’s primarily a suspect,” said Kamishiro-kun, nodding, “But, you know that, don’t you? She’s already been interrogated by the school.”

“Um... Interrogated...?”

“I told you! If you don’t remember check your notebook!” Kamishiro-kun was yelling like he was throwing a huge temper tantrum, I quickly read through my notebook.

“... Ah, I see. Enoshima Junko started to spread rumours immediately following the incident, but didn’t you say she was interrogated? But if she was released just after that... then that means she can’t be the culprit!”

“Thanks to your awful conversation timing, I’ve come to a conclusion, big sis... Well, it’s just as you put it. It seems like the interrogation was highly relentless, I was thinking it would have been impossible for her to escape-”

Kamishiro-kun suddenly stopped moving.

“What’s wrong... ?”

“I see... that’s it...” The boy’s eyes widened, the corners of his mouth shook and trembled, “I understand now, big sis!” He shrieked excitedly, “We completely overlooked the most important part of it all... It really was best to ask you to help me out, big sis. You did great with the interactive mystery part!”

With uncontrollable excitement, he enthusiastically took another sweet bread out of the paper bag, as he bit into it he started to craft a new sentence - by the way, it was a jam bun.

“What I’m saying is, Enoshima Junko was interrogated by the school... that’s where the last piece was hidden!”

“Eh? What do you mean?”

“Well you see, the information I heard while eavesdropping... the interrogation on Enoshima Junko was definitely incredibly thorough, there were things like polygraph testing and kinesics analysis, they started with cliché things like that, then something called ‘brain fingerprinting’ which is a slightly different to interrogating. But the thing with brain fingerprinting is it seems to be noted as being a more reliable lie detector than compared to the polygraph test... The point is, they were using tests that measured brain waves directly to see if she was lying... understand?”

“Not really... but it sounds incredible.”

“That’s right! It is incredible!” The corners of Kamishiro-kun’s mouth twitched up into a smile, “Not just that but none of it would have been possible without an expert!”

“... An expert?”

“For the interrogation, it seemed the school requested a ‘certain student’ to assist them. Of course, I couldn’t find who the student was but... I finally realized. It would be difficult to utilize something such as ‘brain fingerprinting’ without an expert in the field, they needed to collaborate with someone... If they knew they would have no reason to imagine it. I’m saying there’s someone at this school who is familiar with the intricacies of the brain...”

“Eh... ?” At that exact moment, an awful thought came wandering into my head. I didn’t want it to come true, so I quickly tried to think of something else to distract me.

It has nothing to-

“You know him, big sis, he’s the ‘Super High School Level Neurologist’, Matsuda Yasuke!”

I heard something that sounded a short fuse behind my ear - my brain was drawing a blank.

“With the ‘death notice’ from earlier, I thought there was no mistaking there was a connection between Enoshima Junko and Matsuda Yasuke but... perhaps, Matsuda knew Enoshima’s weakness. Anyway, there must be a reason behind their connection, right? The school released Enoshima Junko from the interrogation way too easily!” He continued to talk on, with his eyes shining brightly, I found myself nodding in agreement to everything he said.

After he had spoken for approximately an age and a day, I couldn't help but feel as though I had no energy remaining. Even so, Kamishiro-kun continued to talk. In contrast to his happy talkative nature, I was looked depressed at best.

“... The point being, I can't help but feel as though Matsuda Yasuke may have been ‘the hidden last piece’, you know? I mean, do you think Enoshima Junko has been just obsessively aiming at the good relationship between Matsuda and yourself? Hey, if it really is how I think it is, then don't you think that's the connection?”

I'm not really thinking anything - I don't know anything.

I don't even know how the conversation turned to Matsuda-kun in the first place.

I don't know. I don't know. I don't know. I don't know. I don't know.

I don't know about these overwhelming reasons, it's impossible that everything has a reason behind it - I stopped writing in my notebook.

Because my self-defence is working.

If something came and threatened my world, I'd be happier if I just forgot about it. Because if I forget about it, that means I have nothing to do with it - and it protects my world.

So, I'll look away from life's inconveniences and misfortunes. I'll chase after my world with all the strength I carry. I've cast away my feelings of self-hatred and guilt. Because I'll always forget, whether or not I turn away from the truth.

And so, I have nothing to do with the things I forget -

That's my self-defense.

“... Yeah, I really do feel like we'll solve this soon.”

I suddenly realized, as Kamishiro-kun continued to talk to himself, he was drawing nonsense shapes on top of the table.

“Say, big sis... It seems like the end to your issue is coming soon too. After I solve it, it'll be time for you to get ready to reward me. Polish that fine-ass body. I like to imagine that despite your cute face, at night you're really the [Aburenbou Shougun](#), aren't you? Is that it? I bet you are.”

After he finished his one-sided conversation, he got up from his chair, though it looked more like he was jumping up and down on it.

“Alright! We’re on the home run now!” After yelling out an encouraging shout, he turned around, “I’m sure, next time we meet, big sis, I’ll have solved this case!”

As he waved his hand, Kamishiro-kun departed from the table. However, after only walking a few steps, he stopped.

“Oh, right, right,” He looked back, with an expression that told me he had remembered something, “If you don’t want to be sitting around doing nothing, you could look into Matsuda Yasuke’s small problem. Well, it doesn’t matter how much you look into it, he won’t be killed or anything but... I thought it would be good to mention it just in case. Still, I don’t know what sort of secret connection Matsuda Yasuke and Enoshima Junko have, but it’s better to be careful.”

Secret connection?

Enoshima-san and Matsuda-kun - have a secret connection?

What the heck?

What the heck? What the heck? What the heck? What the heck? What the heck? What the heck? What the heck?

I was attacked by a wave of anxiety, my chest tightened in pain, I felt scared of everything, I was just exhausted.

“... Anyway, it’s about time we reached the climax - You should get ready, big sis, anything could happen.”

Kamishiro-kun finished his warning and turned away, this time he disappeared into the school cafeteria’s crowd like a ghost.

Thus, I was left alone in the school cafeteria. I was still feeling exhausted, for the time being I decided on just concentrating on taking several deep breaths. There was no reason for it. I was simply stalling time. The time to solve the mystery. Time always relentlessly continued in a steady stream. That’s why I spent this time taking in deep breaths.

And I forgot.

I forgot everything, perfectly.

Very soon, I couldn't remember why I was taking in such deep breaths, how strange.

“Well, whatever!”

There was no more that I could forget. From that point on I was bright, cheerful and brimming with positivity. Without so much as a backward glance, I walked to the future, filled with hope. I picked up my notebook from the surface of the table, and with plenty of momentum, I stood from my chair and-

“... Huh?”

I felt lightheaded - or maybe a little different to that.

I suddenly grabbed the table with my hand.

I looked to where I was looking previously, the words in my notebook danced around the page, distorting themselves. At that moment, I shivered and felt like a horde of insects was crawling up my back, my knees buckled, I thought briefly about what was happening and soon found I was sitting on the chair again.

The inside of my head was stained with a metallic grey, my mind was completely blank.

I'm tired.

My eyelids became heavy, and my face slackened, the world circling me was quickly disappearing. The busy, noisy students around me were vanishing, the human shapes surrounding me were all melting together.

It was as if I had been poisoned or hypnotised, I couldn't move a single finger.

It was in that complete stillness, that I suddenly heard a voice.

“Upupu.”

What an ominous laugh.

It was strange, yet sounded so familiar.

“What's this? Did you actually remember me? I'm happy! Despite your awful habit of forgetting things you still remembered me... That's right, it's 'Super High School Level Despair'. It's been a while, upupupu.”

Why can I remember?

Why did I remember them?

Even so I remembered someone. Before, this voice told me something.

Let's meet up again! Then I'll kill you properly!

Suddenly I was looking upwards, before my eyes was a giant shadow standing over me. The shadow had a familiar face. But I couldn't recall any memory of the face. That familiar face stared intensely at me, like it was trying to look past my skin. Their irises were coloured by darkness itself. It was like their eyes were despairing, even in despair. As I looked into these eyes, an unexpected thought popped into my head.

Ah, so I'll be killed by these eyes.

"Hmmm. Unfortunately I can't actually kill you this time either." they whispered to me, like they were answering my thoughts, "Once again, I can't kill you due to circumstances. Since you still haven't tasted enough despair. You need to taste an even more despair-inducing despair, you see!"

Suddenly, all the light surrounding me disappeared. At the same time, I noticed my eyelids were shut. The shadow seemed to cover my face completely.

"But, if you say you don't want to taste that despair... then it means war. If you don't fight despair, you'll never feel hope again."

Those were the last words I heard.

After that voices, sounds, everything had disappeared. As numbness took hold of my body, all my senses stopped working. I was completely still, I fell out of consciousness.

I fell out of it silently.

CHAPTER 6

The man walked to the girl's room quickly, it was clear the girl had not bothered to take the key from her door earlier. Despite this, there was no one inside the room. He swiftly opened the door, letting a rush of air into the room. Inside the room there was a poster on the wall which flapped noisily.

"... Why, why did she have to be out now?" He had told her to stay put, even when she had nothing to do - without realising it he felt like shouting obscenities at her.

That being said, the man had fully realized that there would have been no sense to be drawn from his words if he had done so. No matter what he said to her - that girl would just forget everything.

Letting out a large sigh, Matsuda Yasuke dropped his line of sight to where his hands were. His hands remained scrunched into tight fists. No matter how many times he tried to relax them, it was impossible. He had lost feeling in them long before, he could still feel Murasame Sousei's neck squeezed between his hands.

Murasame Sousei's sore, red eyes flashed through his mind suddenly. He squeezed his fists more - it was like his hands were still wrapped around the boy's neck, suffocating him of air.

"Why... did she have to be out now...?" He whispered in a much weaker tone than before as he left the room.

He exited the dormitory and soon Matsuda found himself heading towards the biology building in the east district. If he were her then he would be there. There wouldn't be another place a girl who had forgotten everything would be.

It wasn't even the height of summer yet but already the back of Matsuda's dirty shirt was drenched in sweat. Covered in perspiration, he felt like he was as heavy as lead. It should have taken around ten minutes to reach the biology building on a normal day, but this time it took at least twice the amount of time.

Even so, Matsuda somehow finally reached the biology building. Looking like a broken wind-up toy, he scaled the stairs in a strange, awkward waddle and within a few minutes was standing in front of the neurology research facility.

As he took a deep breath in he roughly opened the door.

He looked into the room with hope.

However, there was no one there.

It was still too early to be discouraged by this but an uncomfortable feeling stirred in him.

What happened here?

It had not been hidden well, there were traces of vandalism in there, on the desk, on the bed, all over the laboratory.

Don't tell me...

His expression changed as he quickly hurried over to the bed - Something moved under it, as if it had anticipated his actions.

“Who’s there?!” As he instinctively raise his voice, he reached down and raised the bed sheet...

He saw a girl under the bed.

Matsuda felt his stab of anxiety ease with some relief. But within the next moment, that relief was blown away, like an explosion. Matsuda saw the bed thrown into the air. It drifted through the air, looking as though it was much lighter than what it truly was and soon began to spin around in a dizzying motion. After spun for an inconceivable amount of time it finally fell to the ground, like gravity had at last remembered it existed. The bed sheets, still in Matsuda's hand and flipped upwards and lightly grazed against his nose and floated back down to the ground.

A deep rumbling echoed through the room.

After the rumbling had come to a stop, Matsuda heard a voice, or more specifically, Matsuda heard a laugh.

"Aha!" On the other side of the bed stood a girl from before, "Wow, talk about good reflexes. I wasn't expecting you to be there, I thought it was yet another idiotic girl. That girl from earlier had a stupid grin plastered to her face, and all the guys I've seen up to now in this place seem to smile like they're bonkers, but maybe their appearance was grandeur enough to make them at least a bit attractive."

“Y-You... ?!”

“That girl was trying to give him instructions, even if it was in a strange way, and that Matsuda guy asked her questions like he was ignoring her. He just wanted to hear about that girl. He wanted to know about her so much it was unbearable. He was so fascinated by it. He looked at her body over and over again like he was licking it all up. Then, naturally, it shouldn’t be surprising his dangly ronpa was all ho-”

“... For fuck’s sake!” Matsuda suddenly kicked the bed beside him, a metallic clanging echoed through the lab.

“Oh my, oh my, are you mad?” The girl continued smiling all the same, “But it’s me who wants to be angry... Hey, why aren’t you looking at the ridiculously adorable face of one Enoshima Junko like a lust driven demon? Why is it? Hey, why aren’t you horny?”

As he heard the girl's words, Matsuda remembered something.

"... I knew it, you really are weird!"

"Am I? But you see, this is really weird for me."

"... That's your real personality, isn't it?"

"Wait... quit it with those comments about my personality..." Enoshima quickly switched to an offended tone of voice, "For sure, you're making it sound like up until now I was just feigning innocence but... I've been making sure I keep at least one aspect of me the same. So you'll know it's me for sure no matter how I am. Still, since I bore easily, I pretty much hit the snooze button as soon as you got such a sloppy personality. Even still that-"

"What's your purpose?" Matsuda interrupted Enoshima with a question. His expression changed to a glare.

"...Oh, getting serious? You won't waste your time talking to the the ever famous Queen of Chatting, it's like we're in a saiyan battle, right?"

"Just answer me!" Frustrated, Matsuda raised his voice angrily, "What is it you want to achieve? Just what is it you're trying to do?"

Enoshima tilted her head slightly to the side.

"Nothing really. I don't want to do anything."

"... What?"

"It's too late, I shan't do a thing. I'm not going to do a single thing, I have everyone else doing it for me. Guys like the student council, the headmaster or the steering committee... and also that girl who you absolutely adore... EEEEEVERYONE is running around, doing my work."

Hearing that, Matsuda's face went dark red.

"You already know? What I'm doing...?"

"Whatever are you saying?" Enoshima raised her head, Matsuda looked down at her, "I've known what you were doing for a very long time now... You've been doing exactly as I intended you to do, so what are you saying? Hey, won't you tell me?"

Matsuda clenched his jaw at her words. Seeing that, Enoshima quivered with an ecstatic look stuck to her face.

“Ahem... Matsuda-kun’s face sure is amazing right now. That despair-induced face you’re showing me, I’d like to see it more. Become more and more and more and more despair-induced!”

“Fuck... off...” Matsuda’s face contorted into rage.

Watching him, Enoshima snorted and chuckled, she placed her hands behind her back as she casually inspected her surroundings.

“Moving on though... Matsuda-kun, what is it you plan to do from now on?”

“... What do you mean?” He immediately responded.

Enoshima suddenly reached out and grabbed Matsuda’s wrist.

“Oh no, your hand is wounded. You weren’t scratched were you? It’s looks painful. Should I kiss it better?”

Matsuda quickly tried to pull away his hand but Enoshima held on tightly.

“Now let’s see, these scratches were caused by some other guy, weren’t they? It looks like he was probably an honour student. But he was terribly ill, and when he made this wound he was probably bedridden with shock, wasn’t he?”

“How... do you know that...?”

“I don’t know, I just understand. Because it was all part of my plan,” Enoshima brought her own face close to Matsuda’s pale face and grinned crazily, “Upupupu, gotcha, just kidding!” She then released Matsuda’s hand and once again observed her surroundings, “Still, I’m sure there’s a precious existence you want to protect. That’s right, this is disturbingly similar to that thing with your mother, you must feel awful, sorry... Oh, speaking of your mother, I can’t help but feel that Otonashi Ryouko-chan looks just like her... you know, they have the same kind of atmosphere and stuff. I wonder if they shared some sort of connection or similarity to each other. Or maybe you’re the connection? I don’t know if it’s intentional or not, but it’s nice that your friend is so forgetful, just like your mother. I gotta say, it seems like guys today are really into MILFs, you especially seem to like those MILFs who forget their own miserable backstory...”

As she turned to Matsuda, Enoshima looked up at him persistently. She happily bounced, walking around him over and over again.

“That’s why, you wanted to protect her well this time. I get it, you feel sorry for her... even so, you’re troubled. You’re incredibly troubled. That’s what it seems like after what I’ve been hearing...” Enoshima stood in front of Matsuda, she glared more intensely at him, “For real though, what do you plan to do from now on?”

Matsuda opened his mouth, trying to find words to say only to close it again. His pale lips trembled a little but he could only muster a glare directed back at Enoshima. Enoshima looked like she had been expecting his reaction and she began to walk quietly again.

“I suppose it can’t be helped, oh dear. I’ll just have to think about this one a little harder...” However immediately after she said that she stopped walking, “... D-Don’t get me wrong or anything!” She yelled out as she went bright red with embarrassment, “I... I don’t really... mind if you don’t care about it... still, it’s up to me, even though I’m unreliable... a-and I can’t just leave it be!”

He didn’t understand the reasons why.

Enoshima changed her personality with no context, Matsuda wasn’t able to follow along with the conversation's direction at all. She paid no mind to his reaction at all and started to walk around again as if nothing had happened.

“Well, I DID say I’d have to think about this for a bit, but really there’s only one way to go about things...” Enoshima circled around Matsuda as his eyes followed her and she continued in a very straightforward tone, “... It’s Kamukura Izuru. No matter what happens, he’ll end up with the blame. He ran away, and that’s fine since he’s the cause of the incident they call the Worst and Largest in Hope’s Peak Academy’s History. In that case it should be easy to fix the issue with the student council president, and the issue with the guys from the steering committee. Those guys are just trying to cover it up again anyway.”

Hearing her words, Matsuda muttered inside his head, “I knew it. Still, if that guy said what he thought was true, then that means... it just makes less and less sense.”

“Just tell me... what are you trying to achieve... ?” Matsuda asked.

“You know what!! I told you before, didn’t I? I’m not trying to do anything!” She screamed in a high pitched voice, and then laughed it off, “I’m just leaving this interesting tea party. I’ve had enough interrupting things. Right now, I’m just existing as a c-list character, I don’t do anything else!”

He didn't know if her words were truly her honest feelings on the matter. No matter how many times she could repeat herself, he probably never would know - Matsuda understood that at least.

"Well, in the end it's all up to you. I don't really care what you do with this situation... Yeah, do whatever you like. Because I'll accept whatever ending we come to," Enoshima stopped walking. She stood in front of Matsuda and turned to the boy before posing another question, "So, what will you do? It is all dependent on whether you go along with it or not, isn't it?"

Although Matsuda had understood what she was saying, Matsuda had to ask her something

"... You know where this Kamukura guy's whereabouts are?"

"Nope, not a clue." Enoshima quickly shook her head. Matsuda frowned.

"But you said Kamukura would get the blame and nothi-"

"Just relax about it! It'll all be clear soon enough!" She interrupted him in a high pitched voice, "I know where the guys who know where Kamukura is are and what they're doing. Soon I'll know where Kamukura is too!"

"The steering committee... ?"

"Ding dong, correct!" Enoshima announced with a cocky attitude, "If you heard it from those guys, then Kamukura's whereabouts should be easy enough to work it out."

"...but, even if they did that doesn't mean I know where he is, right?"

Enoshima remained with a cocky attitude but her voice and deepened.

"... That's right. It doesn't mean that..." At that moment, the girl's expression slipped and her face deadpanned, like she had lost interest in everything, "But, perhaps that is not such a big deal... I mean, if those guys don't say then that just means Kamukura's whereabouts remain unknown, your plan will fail and I'll be ruined. But, that's all that will happen, so you shouldn't pay too much mind to it..."

As she muttered in a monotone voice, Enoshima turned to the window and walked towards it. Her eyes filled with melancholy as she leaned against the window and stared outside. The laboratory overlooked the east district's courtyard - and the preparatory school's parade.

“... You’re talking as if it doesn’t matter if I fail.” Matsuda raised his voice in a puzzled tone and looked towards Enoshima’s back.

“Because it doesn’t matter,” The girl continued to stare out the window and laughed absentmindedly, “In private, I would always think something along the lines of how despair-inducingly wonderful it must be to put an end to something as insignificant as small fish...”

She said things that she never meant to say, her words were a reflection of her true feelings that lay in her heart. Then that means-

“... You really are weird.”

“Ah, soz, soz! You don’t like that, do you?” Enoshima looked back and had an innocent smile on her face as if he was mistaken.

She had the face of a devil one moment and in the next she smiled like an angel. She hadn’t intended to make either face. That’s why he continued to shake as he talked with the girl. He felt more than exhausted.

“That’s right, for that girl’s sake it’s not like you can lose.” Her pure and innocent smile remaining on her face, Enoshima turned and walked silently to Matsuda, “Upupu. You really are someone who’s in true love. You’re prepared to fight for your love. I bet when they say ‘love is blind’ they were thinking of you... Ah, that doesn’t mean you do stupid things, actually I’m grateful. You’re destined to spend an eternity with that person, so I thank you from the very bottom of my heart.”

Enoshima walked up to Matsuda and didn’t come to a stop until finally their toes were touching. She whispered gently to him.

“Do your best, Matsuda-kun. Because that’s what I expect. Defeat the despair you face and let hope win, shining victorious... Because that’s what I expect will happen.”

As she whispered quietly, Enoshima leaned towards him until their faces almost touched. And she then leaned in more.

In the next moment, their lips touched.

Matsuda didn’t break away. He was puzzled but he gave up and just accepted it as it was.

It was vicious, long, entwining, violent kiss.

After a time that was far too long to be described in a single word, Enoshima finally pulled away. In the moments after the kiss she backed away from him and in dead silence she walked to the laboratory door.

“... Where are you going?” Matsuda asked as he wiped his mouth.

“Hm, in return for the kiss I thought I’d lend you a bit of a hand.” Said Enoshima laughing, but she quickly stopped.

Wait.

You don’t need to go out of your way.

But his mouth wouldn’t move. No, it wasn’t just his mouth, his entire body felt numb and was immobile.

“Upupu. Looks like you were caught by such a classic too, Matsuda-kun...”

Looking at the frozen Matsuda, Enoshima looked like she was a kid who had just gotten a beloved toy. She was smiling, overcome by joy.

“You know, lipstick is a dangerous thing! My lipstick, for example, has been tainted with poison! Ahaha, poison! It just sounds like a classic, so nostalgic! Ah, but don’t worry. It’s not life threatening!”

Enoshima happily bounced around Matsuda’s still form. Knowing her plan worked, she proudly let her joy show. She finally let herself bounce in front of Matsuda.

“Now then, I should give you one final piece of advice!” Enoshima suddenly switched to a serious expression, like a boxer moments before the bell rings, “You know, in this scenario, only you can make the choice, Matsuda-kun. So think carefully, worry about it, and choose the choice you think it best. Hope or despair... the choices are so diverse and yet, surprisingly, intricately connected. Anyway, have a good think about it... um, think... Aah, it’s no good. I’m tired now. I wonder if this conversation is just that tedious... Well, whatever. In any case, that’s our conversation for now... goodbye.”

She bought the one-sided conversation she had started to a one-sided end. Enoshima staggered out of the lab.

WAIT!

Despite yelling it out, no sound escaped Matsuda’s mouth.

The boy stood, paralyzed. Waiting for feeling to return to his body.

CHAPTER 7

It was at that moment that I woke up, out of the blue.

As my consciousness returned to me, I couldn't help but feel completely refreshed and-

"Ahh, thank goodness!" I said, without realizing.

For a long time perhaps, I was having an awful nightmare. But that's over now. I was finally free of my long-lasting nightmare... or maybe not.

Somehow, it felt like this place also belonged in my nightmare. Because if that wasn't the case, then why else would I be in this room?

The walls, the ceiling, the floor, everything was covered with concrete. I couldn't see any doors or windows.

So, why would I be in such a strange room?

"Where... am I...?"

At least I was certain this place wasn't my room. No matter how forgetful I could get, I know I would never live in such an eerie room without a good reason for doing so.

"Don't tell me... I've been arrested, or something..."

Arrested, my words bounced off the cold, grey concrete. I thought I could hear a man coming to my room, stamping his feet with a thumping sound. It was really just the monster we've come to call 'loneliness'.

I can't find the exit!

It was that time I sat up quickly - I realized I had been sleeping on a bed. The bed had a pretty pink, princess-style canopy with an antique feel that little girls everywhere would have wanted, but oddly enough, it was standing alone in the middle of a bare concrete room.

The contrast between the delicate decorations of the bed and the bare minimum on the walls only added to the overall creepiness of the room. In addition, there were other parts of the room that were missing altogether. If this room was perfectly complete, then it would have a furniture, and a door, but this room was

absolutely missing those factors. As I quickly finished analyzing my surroundings quickly, the monster I spoke of earlier began to get to work. My fear and anxiety felt like it turned to pitch black tar, and it felt as though it wanted to steal my freedom of movement.

“Ooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooh...” A moan snuck past my shaking and trembling lips. The room’s outline and shape started to slowly distort. Tears began to appear in my eyes. But, it’s no use crying over this situation. It’s no use to cry. I held out for dear life and despite my intention to hold them back, the tears that had gathered in my eyes began spilling out, good morning, madam.

“Eh?”

Startled, I realised there was a female maid standing next to the wall.

“Good morning, madam!”

A voice came from it, it really is a girl. I could see the girl’s face behind her clothes. But only the face of her mask. Due to her mask I couldn’t determine her actual appearance.

The mask in question was an eerie bear mask which filled me with bad feelings.

The right half was a white, cute bear.

The left half was a black, evil bear.

The girl wearing maid clothing faced me and spoke to me in a happy tone.

“Good morning. Madam! I have prepared some tea for your morning routine!”

“Umm, uh... I don’t think I’m a madam...”

The girl didn’t appear to hear me as she simply walked over to me and shoved the silver tray she held onto me. On top of the tray was a teacup with a floral pattern on it. Steam rose from the teacup and disappeared into the air.

“T-Thank you...”

My throat was parched after waking up and was in desperate need of moisture. Forgetting my prior caution, I picked up the teacup and drank the tea in it.



Too cold! Disgusting! It's so weak!

Incredibly, it was a three time loser. The tea was too cold.

Unable to hide my expression, I placed the teacup back on the tray.

"I shall be taking my leave now," The Bear Maid said as she turned on her heel and began to walk somewhere.

"Wait! Where are you going?" I quickly called out.

"Hm? What was that?" As The Bear Maid asked me, she knocked on the wall in front of me. Just like in a ninja temple, after she knocked once, the wall rotated around.

"... Eh, a hidden door...?"

"Ehe! At the time when we built this facility, we wanted it to adhere to Madam's sense of playfulness!"

"T-The playfulness is fine, but I'm leaving!" I raised my voice, feeling desperate.

"Hm?" The bear mask tilted to the side, "Just because... you want to leave doesn't mean you should leave."

"Huh?" This time it was my own face tilting to the side, "Even if I want to leave, I can't... What the hell, am I being confined here..."

"Confined!" A surprised voice echoed off the walls, "C-Confinement... that's... that's a bit of a leap in logic..." The Bear Maid's shoulders shook with laughter, "Just because I appear to be, doesn't mean I am laughing."

"Ah, I didn't..."

"On the contrary, I am filled with sadness beyond compare," Her shoulders shook more, "I am saddened because you are such an interesting person. I'm afraid I cannot make sense of your jokes. As it is currently, I don't think I'll ever fulfill my dream of having Monobear leaving everything to me. How sad..." The Bear Maid hunched over, looking heartbroken.

"I... I don't think I understand... but for the time being, just how do I get out of here? Can you show me?"

As I prompted the girl, she moved to the hidden door. I looked around the room to find my bag beside my bed.

“... Ah, sorry. Wait a second!”

I quickly got out of the bed and picked up my bag, I felt it's familiar weight. There was no mistaking it was mine.

“Now, time to get out of here!” I said, pushing the bear maid to the side as I left the room of concrete behind me.

What awaited me outside the room was a strange sight, indeed. It was a wide space that looked like a hall, but, just like the previous room, this room's ceiling, walls and floor were all covered in nothing but concrete. However, even though the room itself was wide, the ceiling was very low and it made me feel like I was cooped up. A fluorescent light hung from the ceiling, illuminating the concrete which only added to the bleakness of the room. Inside the room there I counted around 50 legs belonging to school desks, each evenly spaced throughout the room. At every desk there was a person sitting behind it. There were various men and women, all wearing the same school uniform. Furthermore, on their faces they all wore... again, bear masks.

The right half, a white, cute bear.

The left half, a black, evil bear.

“Hey... that bear sure seems popular, doesn't it... ?”

The maid next to me, wearing the same mask answered me.

“That is not a bear, that is Monobear.”

Monobear?

I didn't really care about the name at all - All I could see was many men and women, all sitting at school desks, wearing the same school uniform with weird and creepy masks. There was nothing else I could focus on apart from the strange scene in front of me.

Even so I noticed that in front of the Monobear heads, still seated at their desks, were monitors. The Monobear heads all stared at the monitors, almost like they were preparing to eat them. From where I stood I could only see the back of the monitors, I had no idea what kind of video they were playing, all the same they appeared to be focusing all their attention to them. They were motionless, staring

patiently at the monitors, with all the vitality of a mannequin. I, on the other hand, felt like I had found myself in an empty graveyard.

“... What are these people?” When I asked timidly, the Monobear Maid answered with a serious tone.

“We are mutants. Everyone is oppressed, and so we barred ourselves away-”

“You had to?”

“We wanted to!”

“Instead of hope?”

“Please pay attention... mutants and such have excellent capabilities, for the most part we have not been oppressed. On the other hand, we believe it would be a waste to not hold back our abilities at least a little. Thus we would like to experience oppression in some form.”

I couldn't understand what the girl was saying at all, for the time being I instead tried to change the topic.

“... By the way, I was wondering where this place is.”

“I was waiting for that!” The monobear maid answered, in a proud tone, “This is our secret society, of course!”

“Huh? S-Secret society... ?”

Her words seemed too childish and her childishness seemed too unexpected, if anything I doubted her words. I thought perhaps it was some kind of metaphor. But no matter how much I thought about it, I couldn't think of any other meaning for her words. She must have been telling it as it was.

A secret society though! No one does that stuff anymore!

“A secret society for mutants... that's unreasonable!”

“Ehehe, surely you mean unreasonably cool! I should mention, us mutants all belong to the preparatory school. This is the preparatory school's secret society!”

“... The preparatory school?” Finally, something I could believe was true. I felt like she had left an important clue in her conversation, so I took ‘Otonashi Ryouko's Memory Notebook’ out of my bag and looked for any memories about the ‘preparatory school’.

I found it. I remembered.

The preparatory school is-

I don't really know.

All I had written in my notebook was that it existed, and nothing else. It couldn't be helped, I would have to ask about it straight up.

"... Um, have the people from the preparatory school always known about this?"

"Not always. If we imposed, then our secret society wouldn't be so secret anymore. A secret society must act as a secret society, and so must move as a secret society!"

"But, isn't it still imposing to create a base here... you can't keep it a secret, can you?"

"I must insist you refrain from saying such strange things!" The Monobear Maid suddenly sounded angry, "I have yet to hear anyone claim of our existence! Here in the basement beneath the west district we have quietly, and silently created our secret society, do you understand?"

"... Eh? The west district?"

"It is most suitable for the secret society. Due to the fact that the reserve students and staff are located in the west district, it means the regular staff do not visit anywhere near as much as they would otherwise. Furthermore, there is very little extracurricular activity here and clubs meet at the club rooms, and also this is the basement of a club room belonging to a now inactive mystery study group... that makes it more opportune!"

In the west district, beneath an abandoned club room belonging to an inactive mystery study group, there is a basement.

And that's this place?

I looked around again. There was a slight feeling of being trapped within such a wide hall, even so there were several doors throughout the hall's walls, there seemed to be another small room at the back of the hall. Across the hall, diagonal to me, I saw the entrance to another passageway. It looked to be a fairly long one at that. I couldn't see the end of it at all.

"... Can such a large basement really be underground here?"

“You don’t believe me?” The Monobear Maid asked, suppressing her laugh, “It seems to be so much easier to not believe me... that’s why it isn’t despairing.”

“Despair...” As I said that, I could feel something in the depths of my heart become uneasy. What a foul word. Instead I tried to shake off that word quickly and ask a question which had appeared in my head.

“A-Anyway, I understand that you’re a secret society... and I understand that this is your secret base but... why are you a secret society to begin with... ?”

The Monobear Maid looked surprised, before answering me in a straightforward manner.

“The parade.”

I muttered quietly as I flicked through my notebook, “Um, the parade is... a demonstration from the reserve students who felt dissatisfied with Hope Peak Academy’s education system... right?”

“It is not a demonstration. It is a revolution.” The girl corrected me with much force.

“... Eh?”

“Upupu. It’s so exciting! It’s a revolution to change Hope’s Peak Academy and the world. My heart’s racing just thinking about it!”

A revolution?

What did this person just say?

“And so, in order to complete our revolution, we must destroy Hope’s Peak Academy’s perfect little fantasy world. This school pushes for hope too much, all the while it torments and harasses its surroundings. If this continues, this school’s ‘Super High School Level Hope’ will never be crushed and-”

“Ah, wait a second!” I interrupted the Monobear Maid. There were a few words I missed for some reason, “What’s... Super High School Level Hope?”

“Oh ho,” the Monobear Maid raised her voice in exclamation, “You are trying to test me with your words, aren’t you? That’s quite alright, I’ll answer your question in a flawless manner!”

I wonder why she's taking so much time to talk about such an apparently important matter. I mean, if their society is so secret, then they shouldn't have to bother keeping secrets, right?

But, with all this extra, unnecessary speech she used - she seemed very happy that someone was listening to her story.

"Ahem, Super High School Level Hope is the absolute talent which surpasses all other talent, a genius among geniuses. The pinnacle of human evolution, so to speak. Yes, that is Super High School Level Hope. Ta daaaaaa, that was my flawless explanation!"

"Ah, sorry... I stopped paying attention..."

"Eh? Seriously?" The Monobear Maid looked shocked, "O-oh... anyway..." The girl crossed her arms and after some groaning she continued, "I'm ready now!"

It seems like she's ready now!

"The 'hope' we use in Super High School Level Hope's meaning is a little different from the everyday use of the word, 'hope'. What we call 'hope' refers to 'a talent so great, it can be called the hope of humanity'. In other words, what we call 'Super High School Level Hope' is the owner of the most superior talent."

"So then, you mean an incredible genius?"

"But talented in every way possible."

"A perfect superhuman... but isn't that cheating?"

"Well, I suppose it does sound unbelievable!" The Monobear Maid's tone changed to a mildly offended one, "Like the setting out of a make-believe story. Hope's Peak Academy's mascot has been given so much goddamn VIP treatment that they're on a platter outside of our reach... Ah, it'd be cheating by anyone's standards!"

"... Aren't you angry?"

"I have not yet decideeEED!" Despite her words, the Monobear Maid's entire body seemed to be overcome by anger, "We'll be going against Hope's Peak Academy's research and nurturing of 'Super High School Level Hope', it seems to have a large budget. Even so, its existence is hidden even to the student body! We do not know the details as to whether it is in fact a classified project but, it is entirely frustrating. I admit it, it's more frustrating than anything I have ever experienced! That research funding is being taken out of the preparatory school's

precious budget. This school is literally stealing our money and our hope, and devoting it entirely to 'Super High School Level Hope'. They're using us as a launch pad for their stupid little make-believe story...Is that what this school calls hope? If it's for the sake of that ultimate talent, they don't care what we have to say about it? Is it not worth to even think about those with no talent? Well? WELL?!"

"C-Calm down a little-" ... or not.

"Stop joking the hell around!! For god's sake just what is hope?!" The girl refused to even listen to me, "Aren't people chosen by talent so goddamn great? And the people who wait, aren't they great too? What bullshit! That's not fair, that's just elitist! It's fine if all us useless earthlings die just for the sake of those celestial few, isn't it? Right?! I'm right, aren't I? Oi!"

There was no longer any way for me to stop her onslaught of verbal abuse.

"Bullshit! That hope that they praise as being so mighty is covered in bullshit! Every little bit of hope in this school is covered in bullshit! Oh, incoming! The festival of shit is on it's way! Shit! SHIT! BULLSHIIIIIT!!"

Her words overflowed with nothing but hatred. Her hatred was not half-baked either, it was a hatred like a deadly poison. She seemed to be referring to not just 'Super High School Level Hope', but also Hope's Peak Academy itself and furthermore, the very concept of 'Hope'... etc. I wrote all this in my notebook but soon my hand came to a stop.

Huh?

I returned my attention to the notebook.

Originally - Is what I would say, considering this notebook fundamentally acts as my memory.

Originally, I was suspended from school. It also mentions Super High School Level Hope, the parade, the preparatory school and Hope's Peak Academy -

Huh, but this has nothing to do with me.

This has absolutely nothing to do with Otonashi Ryouko.

"This has... nothing to do with me..." I said so quietly I doubted it was audible to anyone. My words sounded so dry, it was like a desert, it had seeded itself deep inside me, "... W-What do I have to do?"

The Monobear Maid took a deep breath and looked shyly to me. She looked like she had finally calmed down.

“Hmm, nothing.”

That’s right, since this situation has nothing to do with me. So then, I should quickly escape from this place that also has nothing to do with me.

“... Hey, do you happen to know where the bathroom is? I need to excuse myself for a moment.”

“Eh? Is it a number one or a number two?”

“... Do I really need to announce myself before going?”

“No, but you see, we only have one bathroom, so if someone were to use it for a number two then it would have disastrous consequences for others who wish to make use of it. It’s Die Hard! It’s Die no Daibouken! It’s Die In Cries!!”

“Oh, okay! For now I’ll just go to the bathroom!” I said, and began to run like I was escaping. Well to put it more exactly, I was running, while actually planning to escape. More importantly, there was no real sense for me to be in this place because it had nothing to do with me!

“Ah, it’s at the end of the hall. Are you fine without a map?” The Monobear Maid called out as I ran away.

The end of the hall?

As I heard her, I could see the end of the hall growing closer and closer.

I fled to the other side of the hall, between the monobear heads who were still at their desks. They didn’t even bother to glance at me. Their eyes were still plastered to the monitors in front of them.

Just what is it they’re so engrossed in?

I knew it had nothing to do with me, but curiosity had taken over my otherwise calm appearance - so I looked back.

“Huh... ?”

It was completely black. Every monitor was a pitch black, none had a single image projecting on it.

“It’ll... start again soon... so...” the monobear heads sitting in front of me said in monotone. “Phase one has just ended... Phase two is now beginning...”

Interrupting the robotic words being spoken in unison, the monitors all lit up.

*Hope’s Peak Academy presents,
Young people, test the true extent of your ‘hope’ to win!
You’ve all proved yourselves to be more talented than anyone else!
For ‘your own hope’ you must kill more than anyone else has!
The final exam of mutual killing has now begun! (Phase two)*

It used a lot of [flashing words](#), taking up the full screen, even the local television stations refused to use it to such an extent nowadays.

What the heck?

Such a question appeared in my head for a moment, but it was truly only for a moment. The image on the screens changed, it changed to-

Red.

It was almost like each monitor had been completely covered in bright red cellophane. I looked closely and in the red I saw something wriggle. What seemed to be a person, I suppose.

In the room of red, the walls and floor were dyed crimson. I couldn’t make out distinct features but a body covered in red rising from the ground, wriggling and writhing like a worm. The camera captured it all in birds eye view. At first I thought it was some sort of avant-garde dance or obscure video art but I soon realized that was not the case. Immediately afterwards, the stumbling person wandered to both sides of the screen. The clothing he wore was almost completely covered in blood. Even so, I could tell it was a uniform from Hope’s Peak Academy. As the man dragged a foldable chair loosely behind him, someone was begging on his hands and feet before him, the man passed the foldable chair to his other hand and swung it up. When it was over the top of his head, he swung it down and, huh?

I couldn’t grasp what had just happened, I just continued to stare at the monitor, dumbfounded.

The foldable chair was swung down an innumerable amount of times. He continued to swing it down on the groveling man without hesitation. The camera’s angle changed and

showed the face of the man swinging the chair close up. He seemed to be shouting something over and over again.

“Ah, turn up.... the sound...”

The Monobear Heads sitting in front of me turned up the volume on his monitor.

I could hear his yells emitted from the monitor. His voiced only grew louder and became heart wrenching screams.

“... I-I, DON'T, WANT, TO, DIE!!”

Apart from the anguished cries, I could hear another sound ringing out.

Squelch. Splat.

It sounded like yoghurt and cartilage being mashed together, every time the man swung down the chair, a sound would ring out.

“I-I'M!” Squish. “... NOT BAD!!” Splat. “ IT'S NOT, MY FAULT!!” Slosh. “S-SO!” Squelsh. “I'M NOT, BAD!!” Sque-
At that point the foldable chair broke.

But, the boy groveling in front of him was long past broken. His head was beyond recognition, instead looking like a squashed tomato someone had dropped, around it was a mixture of blood and brain fluid. I was beyond the ability to adequately communicate my level of horror. In the monitor the skull was split open and the corpse was spilling out it's fluids. I couldn't look away from the body, I couldn't even move at all. I stared at the monitor, stunned, and totally dumbfounded.

“... T-T-That's, enough,” the man in the monitor said to himself as he shook and trembled. “I-I've already killed those other two... that, s-should be, enou-”

The boy's words were interrupted by the sound of thick glass breaking. Before he could come to his senses, another man stood behind him with a bottle in his hand. Without warning, the newcomer beat the first man down with a single blow aimed at his head.

“AAH... AAaaaaaaAAAAaaAAaaAAaaaaAAAAAAAAAHHHH!” As the man clutched desperately at his face with both hands, he roared out like a wounded animal. Suddenly, with some abruptness, he ran from the room, thrashing in agony.

“W... wait, WAIT!!” The ambusher tailed after him with unsteady steps.

The image on the screen once again changed. Instead, it now showed a corridor. In the corridor was a running man whose face was drenched in blood. Small pieces of glass had embedded themselves into his eyes and caused them to bleed.

“S-S-SAAAAAAAVVENMMMMEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEHH!!!” He screamed out in a slurred voice. His mouth seemed to open and morph into the shape of a grin, but of course, that was not the case. His lips were torn open and he was not long able to close them. Standing in the front of him was a trembling girl.

The girl stood alone in the gloomy corridor, holding a cleaver tightly in her hands. Her creepy appearance filled even me with fear, however, the man running didn’t even see her. As he screamed in pain, he ran towards her.

As the girl readied herself into a defensive position, she thrust her cleaver up. At that moment, the boy swung down his head.

Squelch.

The cleaver sunk into his skull on impact, the shards of glass stuck in his eyes were thrown out. The man continued to run forwards for a few steps before finally collapsing. As the girl’s entire body shook and trembled violently, she patiently stared at the corpse.

“I-I d-d-don’t... want t-to d-d-die...I ha-had to...” The volume on the monitor wavered with her trembling voice. Behind her, I could see the figure of another high school student with an iron pipe in his hand, sneaking towards her.

I finally managed to look away.

It was nothing but a movie made in bad taste - in ridiculously bad taste. This was some sort of video the reserve students had made, right? In that case, it really was scary. More than just scary- it was bursting with realism.

The ‘dead’ people were an image that could be associated with ‘cold’ which in turn could be associated easily with the illusion of ‘death’. The warm blood seeping from the bodies of those dead is incomparable to the heat emitted from their bodies during the time of their life, it fogged up the lens on the camera with the humidity. It was like an immense heat that followed death.

But, just what on earth is going on, it’s just so-

“Insignificant, isn’t it... ?” Much to my surprise, one of the Monobear Heads sitting in front of me, still staring at a monitor asked me, “... This is hope? This thing is hope?”

The boy murmured, sounding honestly uninterested. He spoke, sounding completely immersed in despair.

“At some time in their life everyone will come to a point where they only think of themselves... and so, it’s mutual killing... up until this point, people would say it’s important to have hope... and so they’ll do anything to protect it...people like us have abandoned that nasty habit... After all, it’s just an insignificant little thing...”

He seemed irritated at his own words. His irritation only became more apparent as he spoke, suddenly he began to breathe heavily.

“... Um, how long have you been watching this? Always?”

“Not always. We’ve only seen it 5818 times...”

Did he say... 5818 times, huh?

I felt sweat run down my already soaked back. No matter how many times someone could say this video was fake, it continued to replay through my head. Despite only watching it once, my brain seemed inclined to believe it was real.

This really is something I shouldn’t get myself involved in.

I have to escape right now!

I raised my line of sight up until I met someone else’s eyes. On the other side of the hall, the Monobear Maid looked at me with patient eyes, she waved with her hand. I only felt more tempted to run away.

I felt chills rise up through my spine. As if trying to run from the video that tormented my mind, I dived into the passage at the back of the hall. The sound of my footsteps echoed through the dark corridor. Once again, the walls, floor and ceiling were all covered in concrete.

Concrete, concrete, concrete, concrete!

This passageway was covered in concrete too, it didn’t seem wide enough for more than one adult to fit in. I felt an overwhelming sense of claustrophobia. The only light I saw was the dim, concealed lighting that illuminated my feet, the space was overcome by a strange atmosphere.

I ran down the passageway and suddenly I realized I had not idea why I was running down a passageway, anxiety took hold of me. I continued to run down this endless

passageway for what felt like a lifetime for me. As I ran through the passageway all that appeared in my mind was how much I wanted to get out of it.

My feet suddenly stopped moving.

In front of me, another concrete wall stood in my way. It seems like I reached a dead end. To both my left and my right were bare, concrete walls. But, on the concrete wall in front of me, I saw a door leading to another small passageway.

Is this the exit?

Holding that belief in my heart, I reached out to the door with my hand. It didn't need a key or anything, the door opened easily. I peeked behind the it with high hopes.

I felt a bout of *deja vu*.

Just more concrete. It was a small room with its walls, floor and ceiling all covered in concrete. But, at the back of the room was a bizarre spectacle.

Two parallel sets of iron bars.

A jail cell?

I walked forward carefully and stood in front of the bar grate to my right first. On the other side of the bars, floated a dark black mist. A chilly, cool and ominous air drifted out from the darkness. I timidly tried to look at the other side of the grate.

"... Who's there?" A voice called out from inside the darkness, my heart jumped in shock.

"Eek!"

"Who's... there?" I heard the hoarse voice of an old man. He sounded like he was being overly cautious of something awful.

"T-T-There... W-w-w-where do you mean... ?" My shaking voice bounced off the walls.

From the back of the cell a shadowed silhouette appeared. They remained seated in a chair with their head hanging down as if they were asleep.

"U-Umm... are you okay?" Even so, the person showed no sign of hearing me. I tilted my head to the side.

"... It's no use anymore."

The voice did not come from the cell in front of me as I had expected, but instead, the cell next to it.

“He hasn’t been responding since yesterday... don’t you know it’s useless?”

Useless?

What’s useless?

I once again looked at the cell in front of me. My eyes finally adjusted to the darkness, the face looking downward, blanketed in darkness, slowly became more clear.

The face had lost its vitality. His surprisingly long, dark red tongue lolled out of his mouth sloppily. I knew at first glance. He wasn’t sleeping. He was dead.

“EEEK!!” I screamed as I stepped back and subsequently ended up landing on the floor after misjudging my footing.

It seemed so real, the possibility of the corpse before me being fake hadn’t come to mind at all. This situation had become more scary than anything I had ever experienced in my recollection. Shivers ran through my body so much I felt almost like it hurt.

“Is he... dead?”

He’s dead - the cold air passed through my lips and I felt unable to breathe. I quickly tried to gulp down a lungful of air with a heavy sob.

It was at that point when I heard the old man’s voice sounding surprised.

“Why is it you’re so panicked? You’re... a comrade of those people, right...?”

I flicked through ‘Otonashi Ryouko’s Memory Notebook’ with trembling hands - I almost immediately recalled the memory of the reserve students.

“O-Of course not! Please don’t lump me together with those people wearing the strange masks!”

“So... You’re not wearing a mask?”

What a strange question.

“C-Can’t you... tell just by looking... ?” I stood up, stumbling unsteadily like a newborn deer. I walked clumsily in front of the adjacent cell where I heard the man’s voice. I could see the figure of a man hunched over on a chair.

“I can’t see.”

“... Eh?”

The old man raised his head. The area where his eyes should have been on his wrinkled face - I saw two dark indents instead. It wasn’t covered by shadows. There was fine black stitching, like it had been done by a sewing machine, blood oozed from the stitches and dried within the yarn. It had all come together into a pitch black mass preventing the man from opening his eyelids.

“... Erk!” I felt a severe bout of nausea as my stomach threatened to empty itself, I covered my mouth with my hands quickly.

“You seem surprised seeing this... you really aren’t with them...” The old man’s voice suddenly changed to a pleading tone, “... P-Please, can’t you help me? Help me escape from this place! I couldn’t thank you enough. S-So... I’m begging you!”

Because of the skin around the desperately begging man’s eyes, it was almost impossible to discern his expression.

“W-what... happened?” I asked a simple question with a sob.

“T-They... locked us in separate cells... they wouldn’t kill whoever they broke the jaw of... that’s what they said...”

“They wouldn’t kill... whoever they broke the jaw of...?”

“W-we cheered each other on at first... but the cheering was too much to bear... w-we were scared... if only we thought of betraying them earlier... there wasn’t a choice... S-so.... so...” The old man’s voice somehow went even lower. “So... they broke my jaw.” He faced the other set of iron bars.

The dead body from the other cell wandered through the back of my mind. I wondered briefly why I had not forgotten about it yet.

“Hey, why don’t we make a deal...?”

“Eh?”

The old man's voice sounded like he was begging once more, he suddenly started to talk again.

"If it's about what I know, then we should talk... you came here to hear about it, right? In exchange, you can help me escape from here... how does that sound?"

"... O-Okay." I answered somewhat automatically and instantly regretted doing so.

It really is better to be the one who isn't involved.

Even after saying I'd help him escape, I wasn't sure how to do it. More and more regret began to pile up but even so -

The man with the ruined eyes' story had already begun a long time ago.

"The people from the preparatory school had tried to find out from me... about a person's location. They called him... Kamukura Izuru..."

For the time being, I decided it would be for the best to listen to the old man's story. Either way, it didn't seem like I had any real choice, I'd have time to think about it after the story.

"I do not know where they found out, but they knew for a fact that we were hiding Kamukura. If they found out where he is... they'd be a heartbeat away from true power."

True power - I felt my jaw tightly shut at such a cruel sound.

"They're goal is to... crush this school. Using the existence of Kamukura Izuru... they'll overthrow Hope's Peak Academy from its very foundations."

"D-Did you say crush!" I suddenly cried out, "T-That's... too much..."

If Hope's Peak Academy is crushed, I won't be able to see Matsuda-kun anymore.

"So... you have to do something and find a way to stop the preparatory school..."

"B-But what can I do...?"

"If this keeps up, we'll be handing Kamukura to the preparatory school on a silver platter... and there's no mistaking it'll be the end of Hope's Peak Academy."

"E-Even if you say that..."

“The old school building... Kamukura Izuru’s there.”

“P-Please wait...” I ended the conversation prematurely with an interruption. Quickly, I wrote in ‘Otonashi Ryouko’s Memory Notebook’.

Old School Building.

But then...

Huh?

I suddenly felt an attack of dizziness, I struggled to stay upright.

What’s happening?

“Until just a short time ago, we used have a large amount of guards there. Officially speaking, before the demolition we can no longer do that due to the danger... But that’s not the real reason. In truth, it’s because that’s where we’re hiding Kamukura Izuru.”

As I listened to his story distractedly, it happened again. I felt a dizziness beyond anything I could adequately convey. My vision was becoming a blur, as I stumbled I laid my hand on the bars in front of me to steady myself.

“Up until now, everything I’ve said...”

I knew the old man speaking was right in front of me, and yet it felt like he was in the far distance.

“Is the whole story as far as I know... could you free me now?”

His voice sounded almost like it was being muffled. My heart pounded so hard I could hear it ring loudly in the back of my ears.

“Oy, what’s the matter? Hurry up... The area around my eyes has been unbearably hot for a while now... I want to go to a doctor... Oy, did you hear me?”

I didn’t.

The beating in my ears was only growing louder, it completely drowned out all other sound, I couldn’t hear anything anymore.

I shouldn’t be able to hear anything anymore, and yet I could hear a single, eerie laugh.

“... Upupu.”

At the same time, I felt a presence behind me.

A disgusting presence, it was like having uncomfortably warm air being blown onto the back of my neck.

“... Uruururu.”

Sensing it, my body begun to shake and tremble. I couldn't say anything, like I was paralyzed. The laugh grew louder and higher - it was almost like it was mocking me.

“Uppupupupupupupupupu.”

“W-What’s so funny... !” Even the older man’s shouts sounded like they taunted me, the voice became more intense.

“Upupupu. Upupupu. Upupupu. Upupupu. Upupupu. Upupupu. Upupupu.”

“W-Why are you laughing! What’s so funny?!” The old man shouted, his voice filled with uneasiness. He sounded angry and especially hoarse as he failed to grasp what was happening, “S-Shut up! Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!”

The laughing came to a halt.

“... Upupu, what a lovely face you’re making.” The voice was directed to the old man, “But I said, ‘You won’t ever escape’... Your face will only become more despair-induced, you know?”

“... Wh... wha-w-wh-!”

“Upupu!”

The old man's face was filled with emotion, for a moment it flashed white. His reaction seemed impossibly odd, the laughing grew louder again.

“Upupupupupu. Upupupupupu. Upupupupupu. Upupupupupu. Upupupupupu. Upupupupupu. Upupupupupu. Upupupupupu. Upupupupupu.” The laugh bounced off the concrete around the room, each echo overlaying another.

Like a body with no soul, I stood still, dizzily swaying. The life was deprived from my entire body, making even small movements impossible. I couldn't even ignore the voices, only try to determine which was which. My consciousness reached it's limit, light, sound

and colour had all disappeared at once. The scene before me twisted at skewed, like paint dripping onto water. The old man on the other side of the iron bars also became blurred at the border of my vision.

What?

As I watched the distorting world in front of me, I murmured to myself.

What is this?

Soon the world would melt into the puddle of colours, each colour hardened into different shades. The colours then started to intermingle once again, the world changed to another world. Like a scene with a flowing river, I swayed with the current, and everything in front of me passed me by.

Behind me was a giant, open door.

An avalanche of Monobear Heads poured out of it.

Screams echoed from the direction of the cell.

A puddle of bright red water appeared at my feet.

I ran from it in my trance.

Then, darkness.

CHAPTER 8

The next moment, I woke up to - the middle of a bright, white room

It felt kind of like I had been reborn.

I was re-energized and had woken up as a whole new, reborn Otonashi Ryouko. As I stretched I slowly rose out of the bed.

I looked to the window, the sun's refreshing light slipped between the gap of the curtains and fell on the already shining white room's interior. This sunlight felt like it belonged to the morning sun.

Apparently, I must have fallen asleep without realising, with me being as forgetful as I am it's normal to not remember when I fell asleep-

“... Ah.”

I felt a light at the back of my eyes - An image appeared in my mind's eye.

A basement.

Preparatory school.

Monobear.

All of a sudden, I had a flashback - I was experiencing the unknown.

Could this possibly be my memories?

An itching feeling tickled at my brain. I can't remember something I seem to be remembering. But it was a feeling I only understood through intuition. On the other hand it was baffling to me that I could even have such a feeling.

What is this? What happened to me?

I looked around quickly, with confusion and anxiety boiling up into a ball of fear. I saw my bag placed next to the bed. I quickly ran over to it and searched through it's contents and - found it. 'Otonashi Ryouko's Memory Notebook'.

For now, it would be best to try to remember where this room is. Soon I was flipping through the notebook and remembered where room this was.

Um, this is... the *Neuroscience Institute*.

“Huh... Thank goodness...”

As I remembered, I sighed in relief.

Ah, but where's Matsuda-kun?

I looked around the room once again. However, there was no sign of the man.

“Matsuda-kun...”

I looked down to my notebook and remembered something important.

Speaking of which, Matsuda-kun hasn't treated me for a while now.

For whatever reason, this all seemed to have my brain become more muddled and odd. It would be better to have another session with him soon - irritation caused my body to shake.

Rumble.

I heard a strange noise. It sounded like it had come from underneath the bed. Another itchy feeling ran through my mind. Someone's voices called out randomly in my head.

Eh? Why are you under the bed?

So I can control my frustration and actually concentrate.

As soon as I remembered the conversation between Matsuda-kun and myself, I quickly peeked under the bed.

“Matsuda-kun?”

A pair of eyes met mine. I saw a person hiding under the bed. But, it was an unfamiliar female student.

“... Eh? Who are you?” I asked without thinking, she replied coldly while lying on her back.

“Could you please move? I can't get out if you're there.”

“Oh... okay...”

Puzzled, I stood up out of her way and the girl soon crawled out from under the bed. When the girl had stood up to her full height she breathed out a small sigh. She brushed off the dust that covered her body with both hands. Her hands had caught my attention. She wore perfectly fitted, imposingly impressive black leather gloves. Seeing them made me feel a little gloomy. The girl put her hands behind her back, like she was trying to hide them.

“... Evidently, the rumours seem to be true, don't they?”

“Eh?” The girl had spoken to me without leading up to the subject at all, “Rumours?”

“You're the amnesiac, aren't you? I heard you were being treated for it, weren't you?”

Once again, another itching sensation attacked my mind. I sat down on the bed without any thought. The girl stared at me suspiciously.

“D-Did you say... we’ve met before... ?” I asked, facing her as I dealt with the exceedingly unpleasant itching feeling.

“... I am Kirigiri Kyouko from the 78th batch.” The name she replied with was completely unknown to me. I quickly opened ‘Otonashi Ryouko’s Memory Notebook’ and searched through it for her name. I couldn’t find it written anywhere.

So, we haven’t met before?

“The matter of your memory impairment was kept under tight wraps so you wouldn’t be confused... that was the decision made, wasn’t it? I wonder if it was also Matsuda Yasuke’s decision?” The girl fired question after question at me without warning and I’d be lying to say I wasn’t at least a little confused.

“Eh? W-What are you saying... ?”

“That’s right, you wouldn’t remember...”

“Did you say you know Matsuda-kun?”

The girl didn’t answer. She continued to look away, her reaction seemed to be suspicious. I pressed more.

“Hey, do you know him? If you do then tell me! Where is Matsuda-kun?” I pleaded to her desperately. Since it was such an important thing to me. I wanted to know, I needed to know, where Matsuda-kun was.

“Unfortunately, I do not know.”

“... Eh?”

Matsuda-kun has - gone away.

I hung my head, unable to hide my intense disappointment. The girl vacantly stared outside the window as she muttered something under her breath.

“You are looking for Matsuda Yasuke, as am I. There are some things I would like to find out no matter what...”

“... Some things you want to find out from Matsuda-kun?” I echoed her words, the girl looked to me. She stared at me like she was trying to discern something.

“While I’m at it, there’s something I must learn from you too.”

“... Eh?”

“Earlier, when you looked under the bed, you called out Matsuda Yasuke’s name, did you not? Was that because... you know the man is often under the bed?”

“Huh? W-What... ?”

She had suddenly begun to question me in my confusion, she seemed to be speaking with some restraint.

“It would be wise to answer honestly. Our conversation will only get more confusing if you lie.”

“I... I don’t really need to lie...”

“So then you’ll answer honestly?” She seemed to suggest it quickly, I felt like I had to answer.

“Yes, I see. Matsuda-kun said he had a habit of falling asleep under the bed when he was frustrated in order to be able to concentrate. Why?”

“Hmm, his concentration...” A cruel smile appeared on Kirigiri-san’s face, I was about to yell angrily at her- “Well, it certainly seems like a lie.”

“.... Huh?”

“Matsuda Yasuke crawling under the bed with a clear intent to do so. I used to do the same...” Kirigiri looked to me and slowly started to walk towards me as I still sat on the bed. She finally stopped when she was right in front of me and looked down at me as she spoke, “... Could you move?”

“Eh... ah, right.” Confused, I got down from the bed.

The girl grabbed the sheets on the now vacant bed and threw them up into the air with a swift movement. The sheets floated through the air lightly.

“... You can see it, can’t you?” Kirigiri-san pointed under the bed.

I stood next to the girl, crouched down and peeked under the bed. At the back I could see a large opening, probably larger than 50cm x 50cm with only darkness came from it. There seemed to be a large amount of space in there.

“It’s not a terrible impressive hidden room... a storage room at best.”

“... A storage room?”

“For hiding dead bodies.”

“... Huh?”

Kirigiri-san continued to speak in a calm, indifferent tone, next to her I felt more and more puzzled.

“Under here he hid dead bodies. But, only two... the two missing members of the steering committee.”

“W-What’d you say!” My face flared bright red and I accidentally yelled at her - the girl never looked at me as she spoke with a subdued face.

“I’m joking.”

“J... Joking... ?”

“The average corpse rots at around 5 degrees celsius. If there were corpses in here, they would have rotted long ago. Now, do you know how corpses rot? Proteins containing sulfur are broken down producing hydrogen sulfide which in turn makes the strong smell of the rotting gas. Even if you shower or wash your clothes over and over again, it doesn’t fade. Not just the smell. The rotting gas builds up within the dead body, and thus it’s insides would change dramatically... The eyes both swell up until they pop out of their sockets like ping pong balls. The lips and tongue also swell, and become hideous compared to its living counterpart... there’s no hints of such a thing being in this place.”

A sour thing made up of what I heard piled up. I gathered my senses.

“I... I see... so why did you joke...?”

“It wasn’t entirely a joke.” As if casting the final blow she gave me a provoking look.

“Hidden inside this room is a pitch black jersey and a pair of shoes of the same colour... It looks like he was planning to clean them however they’ve been stained with blood. He had a simple trolley he could carry it all on too...”

“T-To sum up... what are you saying?”

“To sum up, I believe Matsuda Yasuke is involved in the murder of the steering committee members.”

My whole body suddenly bolted upright I started to tremble. As I grinded my teeth together, I desperately attempted to piece together an argument.

“W-What did you say... Matsuda-kun wouldn't... k-kill anyone!”

“I didn't say he 'killed' anyone. I only said he was 'involved in a murder'.” I saw the sun shine onto the irises of her eyes brightly for a moment, “Still, that's what I believe is the case with the steering committee... however, I wonder if the case of the student council president is another matter? Perhaps he was also 'involved' in that too?”

“... Huh?”

“Yesterday evening, the corpse of the man called 'Super High School Level Student Council President', Murasame Souseun was discovered. It was disguised to appear to be a suicide... but there's no denying it was a murder.”

I still couldn't see what she was getting at but I already knew I wasn't going to like it, my heart beated ridiculously fast. My breathing became more erratic and deep, my body was covered in sweat, the blood vessels in my forehead throbbed furiously.

That bad feeling I had was just as bad as I thought it was.

“Most likely... Matsuda Yasuke murdered Murasame Souseun.”

Crack

I could hear the sound of the pillars that had supported me through everything up until now break. A wave of intense anxiety crashed onto me. There were so many thoughts about how to contradict her they all tangled and knotted together into a ball of yarn, I was left speechless.

Kirigiri-san patiently watched me, I had grown thoroughly sick of her calm-as-ever composure. She hadn't shown any sign of emotion at all. She just observed.

I don't know anything anymore.

A strange expression, a ball of tangled thoughts, an overwhelming sense of anxiety and her calculating eyes - they all attacked me at once, I fell into a bottomless swamp of confusion.

As I fell I struggled and screamed out desperately.

IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH ME!

Enough already! I'll just forget it. If I forget everything anyway, then things will just go back to the way they were before. It's not escapism. It's a battle. With the exception to Matsuda-kun, I'd fight to keep everything out of my world.

Nothing to do with me. Nothing to do with me. Nothing to do with me. Nothing to do with me.

Soon, my heart was beating at the same level as an explosive leap, my voice became screams.

NOTHING TO DO WITH ME! NOTHING TO DO WITH ME! NOTHING TO DO WITH ME! NOTHING TO DO WITH ME!

As I yelled with all my might, hot air boiled up from the pit of my stomach. It became a ball of heat, like magma and finally exploded from my mouth.

“IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH MEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!!” It really did explode.

As I screamed, the Neuroscience Institute's door, behind Kirigiri-san, burst open. Glass shards and wood chips flew through the air. It felt the ground like a paper craft being squashed with a delayed thunderous crash. It was like a rainstorm was on a ripping it's way through the lab.

I don't believe my eyes. I did this! Me!

I looked at the scene that had unfolded behind Kirigiri-san's turned head.

T-This is... my real power!

I could feel the awakening of Otonashi Ryouko's fearsome ability.

CHAPTER 9

Kirigiri Kyouko entered the Neuroscience Laboratory - 'that girl' was still lying on the bed. She had heard a rumour about her. Her memory had been impaired and had since been receiving treatment within this lab. It seems the rumour was true. But, it's still fine if that's the case. It was just crucial that Matsuda Yasuke was not there.

Well, I hadn't expected such.

Even so she had still anticipated it. So she moved on and begun to investigate the room. With Matsuda not being there, to put it another way, meant she could thoroughly examine everything without drawing any attention to herself.

Therefore,

Kyouko looked to the girl lying on the bed.

I'd better be careful not to disturb her.

She wanted to avoid unneeded hindrances. From there onward the girl inspected every aspect of the lab carefully. After briefly looking over everything she stood at the side of the bed.

It really is shady.

She wasn't referring to the girl sleeping on the bed, but instead the bed itself. She was anxious to check something - Of course, Kyouko checked the area around the bed, the floor under the sheets was hidden - and that was where she found a hidden storage space.

Inside the space was a black jersey and a pair of shoes, as well as a trolley that could be pushed easily, she reached a single answer.

Matsuda Yasuke is also connected to the series of murders regarding the steering committee. For the time being, however, the only people aware of this connection to the incident was herself and her client, the school headmaster. In addition to this, the corpses have disappeared and the incident itself had little to no clues. Thus the girl had to repeatedly look over the clues carefully.

The evidence of the case had all been found in unexpected locations. She did not expect Matsuda Yasuke to be involved in this matter, but if that is the case - The fact that he is not here may mean he has an idea of the whereabouts of the other two people.

But this line of thinking was in vain, because as of now, Kyouko did not have any idea of the whereabouts of the four missing steering committee members. Still, it was possible to locate them even now. It would be a different story if she were too late, but whichever outcome was fine. It didn't matter whether she saved them or sacrificed them. Her only role was to expose the truth behind the mystery as a detective - those were Kyouko's honest feelings on the matter.

But perhaps those two matters are connected.

Originally the girl had come here for a different case than the steering committee murders. She had come to investigate a matter concerning the discovery of Murasame Sousehun's corpse within the staff building. According to the school physician, just before his demise, it seems Murasame had met with Matsuda Yasuke. However, afterwards, he went missing and his location remains unknown. Kyouko was sure Murasame's death was in fact a murder and no matter how much she thought about it, Matsuda Yasuke was suspicious.

So, for what reason would he kill Murasame Sousehun? To deduce his motivation behind this, Kyouko had come to the laboratory the man would usually shut himself away in.

However, that Matsuda Yasuke seemed to not only be involved in Murasame Sousehun's case, but also connected to the steering committee case. It was no longer an exaggeration to say the man was a key point in both cases. He became involved in two cases at the same time, there was no way it was just chance.

So what was his goal?

What does he know?

What is he hiding?

As Kyouko crawled under the bed, such thoughts piled up in her mind.

A sound from above her caught her off guard. Apparently the girl had awoken. It could be a good idea to try to listen to her in case she says anything. Onlookers couldn't say for sure whether she was receiving treatment from Matsuda Yasuke. All the same, it might turn out the girl has some information, she needed to do it in order to reveal the hidden truth - That was yet again Kyouko's honest feelings on the matter.

She didn't have much time left - Kyouko felt a little frustrated. All her effort would have been for nothing if she did not hurry. Those feelings began to grow.

Matsuda Yasuke probably won't come back here anymore.

That was just a hunch, but at the same time, it wasn't a hunch. It was a hunch belonging to the detectives from the Kirigiri family. This hunch just motivated the girl. In order to fulfill the request she received as a detective. For the sake of her goal she needs to grasp onto the location of Kamukura Izuru.

Because she's a detective.

Simply because she's a detective.

So, in order to complete the goal she had as a detective, she begun her questioning.

“While I'm at it, there's something I must learn from you too.” Starting with that sentence, she started to line up a list of questions in her head and used them to corner her opponent. Kyouko continued to watch the girl's reactions, the conclusion Kyouko reached was -

This girl knows nothing.

Her constant state of confusion didn't seem to be an act, she was able to see the extent of her forgetfulness, it seemed like in this state she would not be able to act as an accomplice.

In other words, there's no point in listening to her anymore.

But, the girl looked more discouraged than before, Kyouko begun to think of what next to do. However, before she could find the answer to that -

“IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH MEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!!” She suddenly yelled out in an ear-piercing scream.

At the same time, a thunderous crash sounded out behind Kyouko. She looked back out of reflex, the lab door's glass shards flew through the air.

And in the midst of it all, a boy emerged.

On that boy's face, like a death god to bring a bad omen to Kyouko, a wicked smile appeared.

CHAPTER 10

While watching my screams shatter the door of the laboratory, I was awakened to my surprising ability.

The tale of the little girl being cornered, suddenly awakening to her power and seeking revenge. I felt like I saw something like that in a movie. But never mind that, more importantly I have to do something to stop my power from going berserk!

I understand. There is only method to stop this rampage.

And that's Matsuda-kun!

Other than Matsuda-kun examining my messed up head, there is no other secret technique to stop this overflow of power. Anyway, I have to hurry! If I don't do something about this soon, something horrible will happen!

That's why in order to meet Matsuda-kun,

I'm going to have to use this uncontrollable power just one more time!

Determined, I turned my gaze towards the wreckage and glared at the back of Kirigiri-san's head. I then focused all my nerves on her head and locked on, letting out all of my power with a scream.

"BUUUUUURRRRRRST!!"

Doing so, the girl's head, like a watermelon, didn't burst into pieces at all.

Huh?

As I looked at Kirigiri-san's perfectly unchanged normal head, I tilted my head as I noticed a someone's shadow standing in the back.

"So, you really were over here..."

It was a low, threatening voice.

The man with the jet-black uniform noisily stepped onto the wreckage of the overturned door while his jet-black hair swayed back and forth. He had a slim frame that gave off an impression that it was much tougher than it looked, and he was quite tall as well.

"...Too good for knocking?"

Kirigiri-san warily chose her words.

"...Mind your own business."

While snapping back with his sharp words, he shifted his gaze alternately between Kirigiri-san and I with his thin reptile-like eyes.

The moment I looked at his eyes, that itchiness started to come up in the back of my head again.

Right away I dropped my gaze to Ryouko Otonashi's Notebook, and then I remembered.

"Wait...but, why?"

After all, he's gotten beaten up so many times right in front of me.

First, when he got caught under a bookcase.

Second, when he was assaulted by the black shadow known as Super High School Level Despair.

Third, when he was confronted by Mukuro Ikusaba right in this Neurology Laboratory. Even with all of that, just why?

"Are you wondering why I'm unwounded?"

Answering my question, Madarai stretched out his arms to an unsettling length and smiled. The smile resembled a crescent moon, making it almost like a mask.

"I've said it before haven't I? I'm immortal."

As if complying with his words, the glass at his feet chimed.

I just wanted to see Matsuda-kun, but all I get are these people speaking nonsense surrounding me.

"Trying to get anything out of that girl is futile..."

"...Who're you?"

Madarai faced Kirigiri-san with a cold stare that would have frozen a normal person. But Kirigiri-san looked right back at him and shook it off like it was nothing, and continued speaking indifferently.

"You were originally investigating the disappearance of the student council, correct?"

Madarai raised his eyebrows, surprised.

"...You know who I am?"

"I just overheard a few things."

Kirigiri-san raised her chin, and after a few moments continued to speak.

"But I know that you are not immortal at least. After all, your ability isn't all-powerful, it definitely has its limits. Isn't that right, Hope's Peak Academy Student Council Member Super High School Level Bodyguard-san?"

"That's something only the student council would know...where the hell did you overhear something like that?"

grind grind

There was a peculiar sound coming from the back of Madarai's mouth.

"If your ears are that good, then you should probably know something about this then. C'mon, tell me. Who's the guy behind Hope's Peak Academy's History's Largest Worst Incident? Where's the bastard that killed the student council?"

"Haven't you been listening? Asking is pointless. Of course, along with that girl over there, I don't know anything about that."

"No, that's a lie."

"What makes you think that?"

"My intuition. Do I need a reason other than that?"

After saying that, Madarai's intimidating presence grew stronger.

The glass under his feet continued to shatter from his force as he stepped forward, and naturally, I began to step back.

"Hey."

While being cautious of Madarai, Kirigiri-san faced me and spoke.

"Judging from the way he's been talking, you've driven him off multiple times haven't you?"

"Y-You shouldn't expect too much from me."

I weakly turned my head towards her.

"I don't really remember, but every incident was just a coincidence, and it looks like he's immortal too..."

While speaking, I carefully glanced towards Madarai, and in return he glared at me with his sharp eyes. Panicking, I quickly averted my gaze while,

"I-It's impossible! At least we can take advantage of our numbers, like one of us becoming the decoy and the other running away...that's the only way!"

I attempted to casually suggest her to become a decoy, I wasn't sure if she successfully took in my meaning.

"So, what are you gonna do? Behave and fess up, or should I beat you 'til you talk? Do you think you could hurry up and make your mind?"

Madarai flipped his greasy, long hair while asking.

"L-Like I said, I really don't know anything..."

"We don't know anything."

In contrast to my stuttering words, Kirigiri-san confidently shot back. She had almost nothing to do with the situation, but her resolve didn't once seem to waver. Honestly, it

was almost like she was being stubborn for the sake of being stubborn. Well, she must have had her reasons, but I would like it if I didn't have to get dragged into this.

"...Seems like you won't budge."

As his voice grew more threatening as he mumbled, he grew a silent smile.

"Looks like I have no choice then. I'll use my true power. I'll tell you right now, this is unlike anything you've seen so far. It's a pain but I'll deal with you in one go."

He then started to sway his slender body left and right.

Right at the next moment, a mysterious sensation invaded my body.

As if I was dizzy, my vision became to blur. Madarai's appearance in front of me seemed to split into two.

But, the only thing splitting into two was Madarai, the rest of the world remaining like always.

"...W-What?"

No matter how many times I blinked, the scene in front of me didn't change.

My eyes weren't fooling me, there really were two Madarais in front of me.

"I'll introduce myself once more."

"I'll introduce myself once more."

In harmony, they both spoke at the same time.

"My name is Yoshiki Madarai."

"My name is Goshiki Madarai."

[Okay this is kind of like a play on words, with Isshiki Madarai's name. the 一(i) in 一式斑井(Isshiki Madarai)'s name uses the character for the number 1, while Yoshiki and Goshiki use the characters for 4 and 5, 四(Yo) and 五(Go), respectively. By the way, Yoshiki's name might be Yonshiki due to certain Japanese language tendencies, but I'm not too sure.]

The slim, long bodies of the left Madarai and the right Madarai seemed to entangle around each other.

The scene was creepy enough to send shivers up my spine.

"You really look just like one...what I heard was true it seems."

Kirigiri-san's cautious words sounded out once again.

"Like I said, just where the hell did you hear about those things."

"Like I said, just where the hell did you hear about those things."(Yo) (Go)

Madarai's creepy voices once again came out in harmony.

"The Madarai brothers...the octuplets from Isshiki Madarai to Yasshiki Madarai (Ya in this case being the character for 8), those who know about them refer to them as Super High School Level Multiple Birth Siblings...due to efficiently utilizing their mutual understanding, their teamwork has led them be known as the Super High School Level Bodyguard, the Madarai Brothers' greatest talent...at least that's what I heard."

"O-Octuplets?"

Octuplets including Isshiki Madarai to Yasshiki Madarai.

Super High School Level Multiple Birth Siblings.

That is the Madarai Brother's greatest talent.

"T-That's cheating, isn't it?"

I desperately shouted out.

"That's not being immortal at all! It doesn't even make any sense!"

Then, the 2 Madarai's mouths creaked open.

"Well, that's just how it is."

"Well, that's just how it is."

"Well, that's just how it is."

Wait, was there one extra?

And at that moment I heard footsteps from behind me.

Both Kirigiri-san and I turned around at the same time, and as if blocking the doorway to the back of the laboratory, stood another Madarai.

"...I'm Rokushiki Madarai." [This time it's the character for 6. Like earlier, I don't know if it's really pronounced Roku.]

That was the arrival of the 3rd one.

"With this, you guys have lost by numbers as well." and in order, "That's why you shouldn't let your guard down." following up right on beat, "We're going to beat reality into you 'til you fess up." as all 3 voices rang out.

Right to left, and then from behind.

They circled around me forming a semicircle, perplexing me.

"H-Hey...what should we do?"

I faced Kirigiri-san with my clingy voice.

"This isn't the time to be"

"thinking about that!"

"thinking about that!"

The two Madarais in front of us kicked at the wreckage towards us, turning the wreckage into lethal projectiles.

"...Tsk!"

Kirigiri-san rammed into me, using that force to push me to the opposite side. The flying bits of the door's wreckage barely missed us at a hair's breadth.

"...There!"

Due to being pushed I fell on my butt, but because it was no time to falter I quickly stood up. But right at that moment the neck cuff of my shirt was pulled from behind.

"Gah!"

Without time to even think about it hurting or to be let go, I was thrown. Like a rampaging child throwing his doll in a tantrum, my body flew through the air with my head and body hitting a wall, finally coming to a stop.

"...Kh!"

My eyes blacked out from the shockwave.

All I knew was that I was in the hallway. It was difficult to comprehend how easily I was thrown from the laboratory, but in any case, I just had to deal with my body aching all over. With my butt, my neck, and my back all being beat up more than necessary, I tried to pull through my numbness along with dealing with the pain coming from seemingly losing all feeling from those body parts.

Then out of nowhere, Madarai stood in front of me.

Not too far from the ceiling, his eyes looked down on me from a sharp angle, which more than resembled a reptile now. In other words, it was terrifying.

"You've gotten away time after time again."

Even though I heard his words, strangely his mouth didn't move.

"But with two people, this should be more than enough."

Then from behind the Madarai standing in front of me, stepped out a different Madarai.

Looks like it was that Madarai who was talking.

The 2 Madarais standing in my blurred vision, this was truly a scene of despair. Not only that, with me thrown into the hallway, I couldn't rely on Kirigiri-san any longer.

"I'll ask you one more time."

"I'll ask you one more time."

They once again spoke out in harmony.

"In what way are you related to this case?" following up, "Who should I be taking out my revenge on?" in rapid succession, "Where is that bastard?" as if winding together, "Or maybe it's really you?" they, "Hurry up and talk." pursued me.

But, right at that moment.

I suddenly felt a breeze over my head.

Looking up, I saw that the window was open.

Ah.

The moment I saw that, an inspiration flew into my mind.

"Looks like you won't talk unless I force it out of you."

"Looks like you won't talk unless I force it out of you."

At the same time, the Madarais' hands reached out towards me.

There was no time to hesitate.

I dodged through the arms as I stood up, and at that rate I jumped with all my might onto the edge of the window. With that motion, I aimed towards the rear garden, and that's when I realized.

This was the third floor.

"Wha-?"

"Wha-?"

The expressions of the Madarais left behind both changed to surprise simultaneously.

Throwing myself out of the hallways' third floor window was definitely outside of their expectations, and that goes the same for myself. Actually, the surprise on my face was most likely even greater than theirs. Then, while still surprised, my body caught by gravity continued to fall straight down towards the garden.

"Aaaaaaahhh....."

What followed that fall was, a shock wave.

It wasn't a fatal shock wave however. It didn't even take my conscious. Miraculously, my body fell straight into some shrubbery, exceptionally cushioning my fall.

That was just 100% coincidence.

I didn't know about it, I didn't aim for it, and I didn't expect it either.

But for some reason, even though I couldn't understand it, I took that coincidence like it was a matter of course. Still, the shockwave was strong enough to numb most of my body, and my arms, legs, and face were all being stabbed by the prickly bits of the shrubbery. Even so, I calmly ordered my head to escape, and my arms and feet slowly regained their functions. I then proceeded to crawl out on all fours.

While crawling, I ran into 2 pairs of black shoes.

Continuing on all fours, I raised my head up to see two Madarais looking down on me.

"I'm Shichishiki Madarai." [7]

"I'm Yasshiki Madarai." [8]

They were different Madarais from the ones on the third floor. Looks like they were called out.

"Well, we certainly didn't expect you to come falling down."

"Well, we certainly didn't expect you to come falling down."

Without thinking, a gulping sound came from my throat.

But despite this nightmare-like situation, I didn't feel confused, scared, or uneasy. Instead, what I felt was,

That intense itchiness in my brain.

And along with that itchiness came a premonition.

I won't die.

I won't die here.

How that premonition floated up was unknown even to myself, but it was definite that that was the premonition. I was almost completely sure about that.

"What's with that easy-going face."

"It's pissing me off."

The two Madarais looked like they were wrapping around each other as they advanced and examined my face. In those eyes were a thick concentration of murderous intent.

"Why don't you understand the situation you're in for once?"

"Why don't you understand the situation you're in for once?"

The Madarais then formed a fist together, and followed up raising them together.

But my gaze was looking past them, focused on the girl behind their shoulders.

It seems that, my premonition earlier conveniently matched the situation at the moment.

"You shouldn't pry into outsiders' affairs so much."

The Madarais turned around at the same time, and the girl who was supposed to be as far away to the point where she was the size of a thumb suddenly appeared behind their backs.

The itchiness in my brain. At that point, I remembered.

That girl's name was, Mukuro Ikusaba.

"I won't say anything but, you should probably lay off that girl."

Then with both hands, she firmly gripped the Madarais' arms.

"...Guh!"

"...Guh!"

As their expressions changed to anguish, their knees hit the floor.

"Give up, your hands won't last in this level of situation..."

Her grip on their hands were so strong that a sound could be heard. Just where could that slim girl be hiding all that power? But the ones that understood her strength first hand were the suffering Madarais themselves.

"Don't screw with me!"

"Don't screw with me!"

The kneeling Madarais screamed, almost at the same time.

Behind Ikusaba-san, who was behind the Madarais, came 2 different Madarais jumping out.

Several right and left legs shot out in symmetry in a flying kick towards Ikusaba-san. But without any signs of being fazed at all, she released the arms of the Madarais in front of her and dodged the flying kicks coming at her in one fluid motion. The two brothers who launched those flying kicks nimbly changed positions before landing.

The four Madarais had Ikusaba-san completely surrounded.

"What do we do about that girl over there?" "Leave that to Rokushiki." "Can you handle that by yourself?" "It's not like she's accustomed to combat." "First let's take care of this one." "Yeah, that would be simpler." While they discussed their strategy with their ridiculously similar voices, their firm watch over Ikusaba-san did not waver once.

But, Ikusaba-san showed no signs of being cornered. Instead, she was rapidly glancing at all their faces while seemingly murmuring her confirmations.

"If I defeat these four, and I just leave one for Kirigiri-san...got it, all according to plan."

All according to plan, hearing those words, the Madarais strongly reacted. In harmony, all four of their voices shouted out.

"What the hell are you talking about!"

But of course, Ikusaba-san responded with a cool face.

"Not much, nothing you guys would need to know...you guys don't even seem to be holding any important information in the first place. That's why I'm telling you now, you should probably give up."

"Shut up!" "Shut up!" "Shut up!" "Shut up!"

The four intimidating voices attacked Ikusaba-san all at once.

"You think we can give up now?" "We swore to them!" "We'll keep on going for the student council!" "We'll prove that to you!" "We swear to protect the student council's honor!" "We'll protect it to the death!" "We'll definitely take our revenge on you!" "We won't let anyone get in our way!"

From the right to the left,

From the front to the back,

Their frustrated interchanging words dispersed throughout the air. Even so, Ikusaba-san carefreely scratched her head, sighing.

"Um, I feel like I can relate to what you guys are going through but...wait, that's a lie. I actually can't relate to them at all...but I can understand them. But that girl is different. To her, she has no gain from understanding what you have to say. Stuff like your thoughts or your hope, they mean nothing to her. It means nothing to the one who set up this entire scenario, so trying to end all of this by pushing on her would be futile."

grind, grind, grind, grind

The sounds of their mutual grinding filled the garden.

"It looks like you don't know anything at all." "You know about Hope's Peak Academy's History's Worst Incident it seems." "That's convenient." "We'll listen to you to what you have to say." "But after we beat you up."

The four Madarais bent down and formed a stance.

"Ah geez, even after I warned you." Ikusaba-san seemed to grumble. "Even though I didn't want any more victims to get involved."

"Victim?" "Victim?" "Victim?" "Victim?"

Once again the Madarais all shouted together. Encircling her like a dog threatens to shepherd a herd, bared their teeth and roared.

"Do you know?" "Do you know about our brothers?" "Where did are brothers disappear to?" "What happened to Isshiki, Nishiki, and Mishiki?" [1, 2, and 3]

Then Ikusaba-san turned back and with her freezing glare she responded.

"Don't come near me..."

Those words triggered it.

A sound like something rupturing was heard as the four brothers kicked off the ground with all their might, as they headed towards Ikusaba-san from 4 directions all at once.

"Like I said...it's pointless..."

Just as Ikusaba-san was about to get hit by the blunt of those attacks, she dodged them completely with just one movement.

"No matter how many of you come at me at once, your base value never changes. That kind of pack mentality attack won't get through me."

While murmuring in that calm voice, she moved at a speed incomprehensible to the naked eye. The Madarais attacked with such coordination to the point where their breaths were at the same pace, while Ikusaba-san easily dodged them with brilliant deduction.

It was almost like she was from a different dimension.

"I won't let anyone oppose that girl..."

Even while dancing she murmured. Her breath didn't falter once.

"That's because this is for...despair..."

The Madarais continued to repeat their emaciated attacks while, Ikusaba-san on the other hand continued to move faster, rolling like a torrent. Eventually, that torrent mercilessly swallowed them up.

From there, it was pretty much a one-sided development.

It developed one-sidedly, and it ended one-sidedly.

When Ikusaba-san finally stopped, the four Madarais were laid around her feet.

That wasn't some halfway transition. What I witnessed was truly only that event.

"It's over..."

Letting out a small sigh, Ikusaba-san murmured while already looking away from the Madarais. Those eyes then faced towards me.



Astonished, I forget what I was doing and was just taken aback.
"Why are you...so strong...?"

"It's all I'm good for after all."

That girl who replied didn't have one thing you could call an expression laid out on her face. It was like she was wearing an emotionless mask, with only specks of blood splattered here and there.

"...Why did you save me?"

"Well, just because."

"Just because?"

Ikusaba-san nodded and dropped her gaze down to her feet. After a few moments of silence, she gently opened her mouth again.

"For example, it's like a video game RPG..."

Video game?

It's like that?

"Like a straightforward RPG or something...the people who live in that world, it looks like they have their own will, but it just looks like that...in the end they are just scripted to act in a way convenient for the game...it's the same with the protagonist, it's just that the protagonist doesn't even realize what he is..."

"What are you...trying to say?"

"Um, well, my fight with the Madarais wasn't a coincidence...actually it's the same with the Madarais coming to the Neurology Laboratory...and the same with removing the unnecessary Kirigiri-san from the scenario...everything was determined right from the beginning."

"W-What do you mean by determined?"

"The same goes for me. I'm just moving along as scripted with her scenario...moving accordingly to her will, only to prevent the scenario from taking the wrong path..."

"Her?"

"I'm talking about Junko Enoshima of course."

At that moment it felt like my blood froze.

As expected, everything returns to Junko Enoshima. Everything from getting me or Matsuda-kun or involved, it's all because of that horrible girl, wait what?"

At that point I suddenly realized it.

"Then, you're working with Junko Enoshima?"

As I glared at her blamingly, Ikusaba-san hesitantly responded, as if embarrassed.

"Well, working with her, it's more like she's...my...sister..."

"Huh?"

It was too sudden of a confession.

Mukuro Ikusaba and Junko Enoshima are sisters... *Wait that's even worse than just working together isn't it?*

"But, even though we're sisters and we're connected by blood...all of that doesn't mean anything to her. After all, all that girl looks for is despair, other people's despair, her own despair, that's all that exists for her..."

All of a sudden it looked like Ikusaba-san's eyes were gazing far away.

"That's why, whoever it may be, whatever situation it may be, whatever world it may be, it just all means nothing to her, unless she is dealing with despair. That's the world of the girl known as Super High School Level Despair, Junko Enoshima."

"W-What the...but that's ridiculous!"

"Yes, it's ridiculous. That's what Junko Enoshima is."

Hearing her response, I felt a new sensation of dread. This time it was creeping up from my feet bit by bit.

"Yes, she really is ridiculous...to the point of despair, she's the lowest, worst sister ever but...that's why I can't leave her alone. That's why I have to help her. After all, I'm the only one who can understand her."

Then, looking at the face Ikusaba-san showed me, I was suddenly taken aback. The ever so emotionless face was, ecstatic and smiling.

"I don't know if...she is attracting despair or despair is attracting her but...she has lived her whole life with despair by her side. She lived while immersed in despair. That's why she began looking for despair in others. She learned to enjoy pushing people into despair. But you know, that's normal. It's the same as someone being cursed by misfortune fall into hatred for those who aren't. But what's special about her was that, she learned to enjoy inflicting despair onto herself. That's how the link to despair began. As she chased down despair, she pushed it onto others on the way. Doing so, it caused her to desire falling into despair even more...and because of that chain to despair, the Super High School Level Despair was born."

While she spoke, it was like she fell into a fever, the expressions on her face turned into ecstasy. It was so completely absurd that it would have been hard for anybody to think of it as anything but a joke, but I understood that this was real. It might've been because the memories of Junko Enoshima inside me led to that conclusion.

"Hey, you don't get it right? I don't think anybody could. But you know, only I can understand it..."

Consumed by ecstasy, even Ikusaba-san's breaths began to become ragged.

"Only I am able of understanding her. That's why she needs me. She still hasn't realized that but, maybe she is only pretending not to realize. Ufu, that's because she's so shy. Ufufufu."

Seeing this intoxicated Ikusaba-san continue to talk like that, repelled me. I knew that she definitely didn't have normal feelings for Junko Enoshima, but that sort of thing shouldn't have anything to do with me.

"...That's right, it has nothing to do with me."

Without thinking, I started speaking.

"Eh....?"

"It's not like I know anything about you or Junko Enoshima...that sort of thing doesn't have anything to do with me..."

Realizing what I was saying, I quickly apologized.

"Ah...I'm sorry!"

At that moment, Ikusaba-san's face turned pale.

"I'm sorry! I'm sorry! I'm sorry! I'm sorry! I'm sorry!"

Getting more and more into it, I began to bow my head as well.

"You don't need to apologize that much..."

"I'm sorry! I'm sorry! I'm sorry! I'm sorry! I'm sorry!"

Even so, I continued to apologize to the point where she almost felt bad, and then I realized how tired I was. Putting everything aside, I was tired. Tired from the confrontation of the Madarais, the conversation with Ikusaba-san about Junko Enoshima, and above all, I just wanted to see Matsuda-kun.

That's right, I want to see Matsuda-kun!

"Hey, it's okay if I leave now right?"

With eagerness strong enough to blow away my tiredness, I felt like I had to get out of this place and without waiting for her answer,

"Anyway, thanks for helping me! I'll be leaving now!"

Leaving those words, just as I started running off,

"Oh, wait. I still haven't told you the whereabouts of Yasuke Matsuda."

Immediately breaking to a stop, I turned around and faced Ikusaba-san.

"If you don't know where he is...you probably won't be able to see him..."

"How do you know where Matsuda-kun is?" I immediately ran up closer to her. "More importantly, if you know then please tell me!"

But as I approached her, I was suddenly taken aback.

Ikusaba-san's face was radically different from earlier, a grim stern expression. It felt like she was a sniper in a battlefield aiming at her target.

"I don't like it when things go towards this direction after getting along so well, but this is part of the scenario so I have no choice..."

While murmuring with sadness as if she was about to cry, she shot her freezing glare towards me.

"In order for me to tell you Yasuke Matsuda's whereabouts, an exchange is required."

"E-Exchange?"

Ikusaba-san then pointed towards the Madarais laying on the floor, and spoke with a low voice.

"Those people laying over there still don't know about the last remaining member of the student council, the student council president, being murdered. I'm sure if they found out, they would fall into despair...despair strong enough to push them to even die for the sake of revenge."

"W-What are you saying?"

My voice filled with tension, even I understood what she was talking about.

"If you leave them be, I'm sure they would go and kill Yasuke Matsuda."

Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Soon, those words began to spin around in my head.

"Why does Matsuda-kun need to die...the student council president's murder has nothing to do with him!"

"That's not true, it does have something to do with him."

Ikusaba-san shook her head.

"Because, Yasuke Matsuda murdered the student council president."

Murdered. Murdered. Murdered. Murdered. Murdered. Murdered. Murdered. Murdered.
"That's why we'll exchange."

While saying that, she took *something* out of her pocket and threw it towards my feet.

"Work your hardest for his sake. If you really love Yasuke Matsuda...then you'd work your hardest for him."

I dropped my eyes towards my feet. Sitting on the moist ground was a knife with Hope's Peak Academy's emblem engraved onto it. The moment I laid eyes on it, my heart began beating with an amount of blood strong enough to break a vessel.

"To seize hope for both him and yourself...you must work at your hardest."

I can't be expected to-

Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill.

"Y-You can't be serious right...?"

"No, I'm serious."

Without time for thinking she immediately responded.

"You will overcome Hope's Peak Academy here. With the sacrifices of the Madarais, you will obtain true hope...that is the scenario Junko Enoshima has assigned to you."

What is this...

The scenario Junko Enoshima assigned...

Why?

Why am I forced to do this?

The severe confusion gave me a fever, I was attacked with immense dizziness and ringing in my ears.

"Why!" "Why!" "Why!" "Why!" "Why!"

And then I realized I was gazing up at the sky.

Thick, grey clouds began covering the sky, making it like only this moist, gloomy garden was in the middle of the night, enveloped in silence.

While I stared at the sky absent-mindedly, I could feel the black, helpless emotions inside of me bubbling up. Like the toxic sludge from underground sewers, it dried up like dead grass.

This is...

I stopped and thought with my hazy head.

This is despair.

"To overcome this despair and...seize hope."

Who's voice was that?

Was it mine?

Ikusaba-san's?

Or was it...

But, it already had nothing to do with me.

Suddenly, I reached out my hand towards the silver knife. And then to slice away the dark fog of despair, I wielded the knife in a trance.

Doing so, I felt the texture of flesh.

Beyond the knife standing into the Madarai's bodies, I could feel the blade stabbing all the way through the skin and muscle.

The fresh blood squirting out. The cries of death.
Goosebumps spread across my skin and I instantly felt the pain of my stomach's insides knotting together.
Despite that, I stabbed.
Overcome despair, for the sake of seizing hope for Matsuda-kun and I.
I stabbed and stabbed and stabbed and stabbed and stabbed and stabbed and stabbed and stabbed and stabbed and stabbed and stabbed.
I could hear my screams coming from far away.
They were screams from my broken heart.
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHH "AAAAAAHHH!"
I then returned to myself.
From there, as if to shake off the delusions floating up into my head, I soon screamed once again.
"I-I-I can't do it!"
While my hand was ridged from reaching out towards the knife, my head ached from fear of the simulation that just flew by my mind.
I won't do it! I have no reason to do this!
"Ah, um..."
Then, i heard the puzzled voice of Ikusaba-san coming from above.
"You know that if you don't overcome despair here, you won't be able to seize hope....right?"
"I-I can't do that!" I screamed while sobbing. "Hope and despair...that's just what you or Junko Enoshima have been talking about right? It has nothing to do with me!"
My throat began to burn up from screaming so much, and my tears and snot mixed together as I crouched towards the ground.
"Uu..H-Help me...Help me Matsuda-kun..."
As if pleading, I continued to cry. Grasping my head, I continued to shamelessly cry.
"Help me...help me Matusda-kun...Matsuda-kun, Matsuda-kun, Matsuda-kun..."
Then, an even further puzzled voice could be heard from Ikusaba-san.
"Um...I don't really know what to do in these kinds of situations...but anyway, I'll tell you where Yasuke Matsuda is."
"....Huh?"
In surprised, I lifted my head up.
"....Huh?"
Ikusaba-san was in surprise as well. Probably because my face was so unsightly from crying.
"You'll...tell me?"
"Well...if things end at this rate, Junko-chan will get mad at me..."
Hearing that, I scrubbed my face with the sleeves of my uniform, and once again firmly stood up on my two feet. I then slapped my cheeks to focus, and faced Ikusaba-san with a question.
"Then...tell me. Where is Matsuda-kun?"
Ikusaba-san then responded with a light voice.

"Um, Yasuke Matsuda is at the Ex-School Building."

Once again, the intense itchiness attacked my head.

"Ex-School Building..."

It felt like I heard those words not too long ago somewhere. But it was no time to be dealing with that itchiness right now.

"Got it...so if I go to the Ex-School Building I'll meet Matsuda-kun right?"

"Yes, that place is supposed to be the planned climax."

I'm able to meet Matsuda-kun. With that thought in mind, a mysterious power seemed to come up from deep within me. My screaming and shouting and falling into despair from before seemed to all be a lie.

This is...

I felt myself brimming with energy.

This is hope!

"Thanks! I'll be taking off then!"

I then bowed my head towards Ikusaba-san. I had no reason to bow my head towards the sister of the horrible Junko Enoshima who was assisting her in that messed up plan but, this might be the power of hope as well!

"Alright, good luck then. I'll take care of cleaning up what's left here."

Ikusaba-san spoke while looking around at the Madarais laying at her feet.

"After I clean this up I'll go and help Kirigiri-san...then I'll remove Kirigiri-san from this scenario...then everything will go along just like the scenario...so leave the rest to me..."

I was tired of hearing her repeatedly talk about the scenario towards the very end. That's why with a short "Bye!", I immediately ran off.

But as soon as I dashed off, I suddenly noticed something.

While running, I turned around and saw Ikusaba-san absent-mindedly standing still.

Lying around her where those four Madarais but,

I felt like there was something missing there.

But I couldn't remember what.

But it wasn't the time to think about something like that, and I continued to run straight ahead.

That's right, I don't have the time to be turning around.

I was heading towards Hope Peak's Academy North District's Ex-School Building.

Even without looking at Ryouko Otonashi's Notebook, the path towards my destination somehow floated up into my head. It looks like I was pretty troubled. Troubled to the point where I couldn't handle it, but if it's to meet Matsuda-kun, then it'll all be okay. I'll be able to get rid of this uneasiness.

That's because if I meet Matsuda-kun, everything will turn back to normal. My head will become normal again, and then I'll be able to return to those peaceful days with Matsuda-kun.

Whatever there may be, whatever may happen, I'll return to those peaceful days of receiving treatment from Matsuda-kun.

That is my ideal happy ending.

What I was heading for wasn't the Ex-School Building, it was towards that happy ending.

Heading towards that happy ending, I ran as fast as I could.

CHAPTER 11

Huh? Rain?

I noticed it while entering the central garden from the back garden of the Biology Laboratory. It seemed like rain began falling at some point. The rain wasn't too hard, but it was strong enough for sounds of it hitting the trees and grass to be heard.

But this level of rain won't be enough to stop me. As the cold rain engulfed my body, I aimed towards the lined up school buildings and dashed off from the East District's central garden.

Due to either the rain or because it was possibly during lecturing hours, there weren't many students around in the central garden. Either way, there were students running as if fleeing from the rain, and others who were calmly walking under umbrellas. As I ran ahead at full speed without any kind of protection from the elements, I must have gotten some odd looks towards my direction.

This kind of thing would normally have nothing to do with me, but for some reason this particular time I felt a bit annoyed.

I felt a violent irritation develop as those people standing from a safe place watched me as if examining some kind of swelling tumor.

Even so, I continued to tell myself that it had nothing to do with me as I ran straight through the central garden.

At that rate, I eventually exited the East District and ended up at the Central Plaza, and then-

Once again I caught sight of groups of students. Most likely they were heading back to their dormitories in the South District. Different colored umbrellas in hand, they seemed to enjoy chatting with each other as they slowly walked down the pavement.

Glancing at them from the back of my eye, I dashed off from the pavement.

There probably isn't any clear-cut road leading to the North District's Ex-School Building, so unless I cut through the Central Plaza I won't be able to proceed.

The grass at my feet was wet, and there were puddles developing here and there as well.

Reaching the now half-vacant North District, my figure soon disappeared from other people's vision, seeing how there wouldn't even be many people in this area on a rainy day like this.

The grass at my feet became more and more bare as I proceeded, and the number of trees began to decrease as well. Eventually the land presented itself to be almost like a wasteland.

After progressing through the wasteland for a bit, an artificial structure came into view.

That's...I see

As I looked up at the building, I began to slow down my running pace.

Hope's Peak Academy Ex-School Building.

Just looking at its solemn appearance didn't give the impression that it was some abandoned building. But...

Not having done so for quite a while, I checked out my Ryouko Otonashi Notebook.

It seemed that this building had already fulfilled its role, at most half a year ago. If that was true, then it wouldn't be strange for this building to still seem like it was used not too long ago.

But the tall fences that surrounded the building seemed to shout that it was already finished. Plates were even stuck on the fences detailing "Hope's Peak Academy North District Planned Construction Land, DO NOT ENTER".

While straightening out my unsteady breath, I walked at a slow pace around the fence. To enter the Ex-School Building, it seemed that there was no other way than to climb over these but,

Then, once again I could feel that itchiness in my head.

Still not used to it, my face grimaced, and then suddenly a thought floated into my head.

Speaking of which, I remember hearing that there were security guards around this area.

Even though I didn't look at my Notebook, I remembered that. Surprised by those turn of events, I came to a halt without thinking, and then, another wave of surprise washed over me.

A number of security guards surrounded me.

"...Eh? Huh?"

In a panic, I frantically looked around me. Speechless and emotionless, almost like if they were lifeless mannequins. All they were doing was simply looking straight at me.

"U-Um...I'm not really anyone suspicious or anything....wait, what?"

Without listening to my excuses, the security guards split up and dispersed. Ignoring what should have been an obvious intruder, they continued their patrol and left.

"Eh? Huh? Um..."

Being left behind, I stood there shocked speechless, and then met eyes with the only remaining security guard.

He's young?

The face under the helmet was of a high schooler's, no matter how you looked at it. His mouth twisted into something like a smile, and he brought out a shining object.

It was a medal.

That medal had a bear mascot engraved upon it.

It was half white and half black, it was a peculiar bear mascot.

If I recall correctly that was,

"It was called...Monokuma..."

It happened again. Without even looking back at the Notebook, that thought floated up into my head by itself. It was almost like someone else's thought was pushed into my head, it was an eerie sensation.

Is this what remembering is?

But this wasn't the time to be analyzing myself-

Suddenly the right arm of the security guard unexpectedly extended outward.

It seemed like he was pointing to something with that right arm.

Following that direction with my eyes, I was led to a small opening one could crawl into between the fences.

But, why would a security guard tell me something like that?

The moment I returned my eyes towards the security guard, he was already walking away.

Not exactly sure why, I absent-mindedly gazed at his figure moving farther and farther away, as another thought suddenly floated into my brain again. It looked like I remembered yet another thing.

In the end, everyone is just conveniently moving along the Scenario.

Suddenly I felt some kind of heavy fear pressing on me from the back of my head.

But, it'll all be alright.

I desperately convinced myself.

Anyway, if it's to meet Matsuda-kun, then everything will be alright.

That's what I believed.

I believed in Matsuda-kun.

I believed in my feelings for Matsuda-kun.

I believed in the world of myself and Matsuda-kun.

By earnestly believing in him I blew away all my uneasiness, and then moved forward with renewed vigor.

CHAPTER 12-A

I crawled under the small opening in the fence and reached the back side of the Ex-School Building.

As I walked around the building looking for an entrance, I came across a large entranceway in the front. Possibly due to the building's condition getting worse, the door was half-open, it was pretty obvious that it wasn't locked. I drew closer to it while keeping an eye out, and carefully slipped into the opening. What laid ahead of the door was a dim, dusty entrance hallway.

"...Matsuda-kuuuun"

While calling out his name, I continued to proceed down the entrance hall. Wet noises could be heard coming from my shoes absorbing the moisture at my feet.

"Matsuda-kuuuun. Where are yooooou?"

While raising my voice and peeking down the hallway, I felt like something was out of place.

Isn't it too dark?

Even more so than the entrance hall, the hallway ahead of me seemed to be enveloped by some unnatural darkness.

It was as if not even one ray of light could shine through it.

But it should've still been afternoon. No matter how much it rains, there should've been some sign of the sun's light coming through the windows-

snap

A strange sound rang out in the darkness.

"Wah!"

It wasn't just once, like a chain reaction those sounds began to continuously multiply.

snap *snap* *snap* *snap* *snap*

One by one, the lights turned on throughout the hallway, and by the time the sounds stopped the whole building was bright with light.

"...Matsuda-kun?"

That was all I could think of.

He must have responded to my voice calling out. With that expectation pushing me forward, I proceeded down the hallway enveloped in artificial light.

"Matsuda-kuuun! Where are you!"

As I peeked into a passing classroom, "Matsuda-kuuun?" Checking a bathroom,

"Matsuda-kuuun" While walking up the stairs, "Matsuda-kun?" Peeking into yet another classroom, "Matsuda-kuuun?" Checking a bathroom, "Matsuda-kuuun" While walking up the stairs, "Matsuda-kun?"

While continuing to go through those actions, I eventually ended up at the highest floor. Even there while calling out "Hey! Matsuda-kun!" and going through the hallways, bathrooms, and classrooms, I couldn't catch sight of him anywhere.

Getting tired, I decided to catch a quick breath.

Then once again that thought came into mind.

So the Ex-School Building was something like this.

As I walked around the building looking for Matsuda-kun, the atmosphere didn't really give the impression that it was anything like a school.

First of all, there weren't any windows here. From the first floor all the way to the highest floor, the windows in all the hallways and classrooms were boarded up with thick wooden planks, appearing to be the cause of the unnatural darkness. Further more, all the hallways and classrooms had seemingly nonsense, disgusting pieces of artwork with bad taste scattered everywhere.

As a result, any trace of the building being a school was lost.

It was unthinkable that this building was in this state even from when it was being used, but if that was the case, then someone for some reason definitely had to have planned this. But who and why?

"Aah, you must be pretty surprised huh."

"Kyaaaaaaaa!"

With no warning whatsoever a voice came out from behind me, and without thinking I jumped up.

In a panic, I turned around and- *Huh?* There wasn't anyone there.

"Well that's to be expected. Even I was surprised by all of this."

Even so, I could still hear that voice.

Once again, I looked around my surroundings and, as I thought, I couldn't detect any human figure.

"...Hey, Onee-chan, where are you looking? I'm right here, you know."

[Onee-chan is the more polite way of saying big sister. It is used occasionally by younger boys when addressing an older girl, and a general term used by people when addressing teenage to young adult women.]

The voice was coming from in front of me, coming right from the hallway.

"Yes, yes. I'm right here."

Wincing due to the exceedingly strange turn of events, I focused my conscious towards the direction where the voice was coming from. As I continued to stare, a young boy's figure began to float up.

"Um, a child?"

"Oh, I guess you forgot about me once again!"

The boy looking to be fed up, put his hands onto himself.

"...I'm Yuuto Kamishiro. Class 77's Super High School Level Spy!"

I immediately opened up the Ryouko Otonashi Notebook and was able to remember before that annoying itching bothered my head.

"Ohhh, Kamishiro-kun!"

"Geez, how many times have I introduced myself by now?"

Displeased, Kamishiro-kun puffed out his cheeks.

"...Wait, why are you in a place like this?"

"That's what I was going to say."

While letting the air out from puffing his cheeks, he spoke

"Actually, how did you even get in here? Weren't there a good amount of security guards wandering around the area? It's nothing for someone with no presence like myself, but I would think it would be impossible for an average person like you to get past all those guards."

I was at a loss for words. There's no way he would believe me if I said that the security guards just let me through,

"Um...it just kinda, happened..."

As a result, that was the only explanation I could think of.

"You forgot how you got in here? Oh well, guess there's no choice."

But it seemed like he accepted it one way or the other.

"Well, there's nothing I can do if you already got here."

Kamishiro-kun then began boastfully talking about how he got into the school. From the results of various espionage activities, he caught wind of the secrets connecting the Ex-School Building and the series of incidents occurring, and then sneaked into the building itself not much earlier from when I reached it, it appears.

By the way, it appeared that it was also Kamishiro who found the breaker to the electricity and turned on all the lights.

"But it's pretty impressive that you were able to find the breaker when it was so dark."

"Ahaha, I guess the night vision scope I use in my hobbies was pretty helpful!"

Scared, I decided not to ask about what exactly those hobbies would be.

"Well when I think about it, meeting you here was some good timing. After all, if you, my client, weren't here the Resolution Phase[honestly I don't know what the original text is supposed to translate into] wouldn't be able to start."

"...Huh? Resolution Phase?"

Kamishiro-kun then took out a pastry and with a huge bite stuffed it in his cheeks, and spoke in a proud manner.

"Basically, I already got the full picture of this story down. The next step is to take care of things in a spy-like manner and prevent it from happening, and that'll be another case complete!"

"Hmm, I see..."

"Ehh?? Isn't that reaction a bit too weak?"

Kamishiro-kun proceeded to then ridiculously over-react.

But a weak reaction was to be expected, after all, things like the case or the Resolution Phase didn't matter to me at all.

More importantly, Matsuda-kun.

I need to meet Matsuda-kun!

"...It'll be alright. Yasuke Matsuda should be heading over here soon."

"...Huh?"

"You were probably worrying about Yasuke Matsuda right?"

While suppressing his laughter, he shoved the rest of the bread into his mouth and immediately started off in another direction.

"Alright, let's go. We'll talk while walking."

"...Eh? Go as in, where?"

"C'mon, if you don't hurry I'll leave you behind!"

Kamishiro-kun then rhythmically got on the stairs, while I hurriedly followed after.

"Hey, Hey wait! You know where Matsuda-kun is?"

"Ahaha, already going off about him, you sure are impatient Onee-chan! Well, I don't really dislike that part of you however. You know, it's pretty common in American movies. Those scenes where they start stripping down while roughly getting it on...that kind of impatience really turns me on!"

"Hey, stop screwing around."

"You're the one screwing around aren't you?"

Without thinking my whole body froze when Kamishiro-kun turned around and looked at me.

It was because the look on his face was unexpectedly dangerous and ruthless.

"Matsuda-kun, Matsuda-kun, man you sure are persistent. Just be quiet and listen to what I have to say for now."

Without any word of confirmation, Kamishiro-kun's words and gaze put pressure on me, and he then returned to seemingly bouncing down the stairs.

After leaping towards the end of the flight, he once again turned back towards me and-

"What's wrong Onee-chan? Hurry up!" his face already returned to that innocent smile.

"C'mon, hurry up!"

"...A-Alright."

Confused, I walked down the stairs. After rejoining Kamishiro-kun at the end of the stairs, we continued side-by-side down the next flight.

"Ok, let's start with Hope's Peak Academy's Worst Incident."

It seemed that his Resolution Phase or whatever has already begun.

"I think you already got the gist of it but, Hope's Peak Academy's Worst Incident occurred somewhere in this Ex-School Building. That's right, everything, started, right, here."

Connecting everything in one go, that seemed to be the detective-style way of the Resolution Phase.

"It was certainly the worst incident, the worst incident that ever occurred in Hope's Peak Academy. After all, 13 members of the Student Council composed of the elite were murdered...but there were two people who survived that Worst Incident...one was the Super High School Level Student Council President, Souda Murogane, who somehow escaped along with suffering major injuries, and the other person was,"

"Izuru Kamukura."

Wait, what?

Even I was surprised as I blurted those words out without thinking.

"How rare to see you remembering something..."

Kamishiro-kun's strange gaze then stuck onto me.

"...Well, whatever."

He soon moved on and began explaining once again.

"Izuru Kamukura was hiding something, the fact that he was an individual amazing enough to be called Super High School Level Hope. Kamukura was researched on by Hope's Peak Academy, they raised him, he was the result of their collective effort, every talent and ability was forced into his body that was of the Super High School Level Class. He was truly Hope's Peak Academy's Hope. That's why the school hid the existence of that secret, to the point where no student knew anything about Izuru Kamukura, whether he was a boy or a girl...he was raised completely sheltered."

Sheltered upbringing...living completely closed off from the world, I was the same as him. I was shocked that it sounded almost exactly like myself.

"But...that Kamukura guy caused a ridiculous incident to occur."

Kamishiro-kun's tone then seemed to become more serious.

"Kamukura of all things caused that bizarre mass murder to occur within the school...it really was the worst. After all, the person who was praised to be Super High School Level Hope more than anyone else caused such a despair-inducing incident to occur. If it wasn't the worst, then I don't know what it is."

That was the reason why it was called Hope's Peak Academy's Worst Incident, that certainly was something the school would label it as. The existence they raised together as a collective effort committing such an unprecedented bizarre murder crime, there wasn't anything to call it but the worst.

"But that's not all there is. What's even worse is that not only did the school not bring light to the situation, they attempted to fully conceal it."

As he spoke while rhythmically stepping down the stairs, I was completely sucked into what he was saying. Without making any sort of response, without writing anything in my Notebook, I just intently listened to what he had to say.

"The school was most likely afraid...after all, if people were to catch wind of that incident, the foundation of the school's principal "Talent is humanity's hope" would crumble. If that happened, the school would lose authority, and if handled improperly they wouldn't last much longer...that's why the school is trying to hush up the incident."

Well, there was probably pressure from outside sources as well, but the ones we should feel sorry for are those Student Council guys..."

Student Council, those words snuck into my head, and along with that itchiness, it forced that memory to surface.

That memory was the Madarai brothers, their faces as they relentlessly chased after that incident.

"After all, those guys all died in vain. It really is awful. It's like as long as it's for the sake of the school's Hope, anything can become a stepping stone...even if it wasn't the Preparatory Department, that kind of thinking is to be expected...[okay I have no clue what this last part was trying to say so whatever]

I shook my head and chased those images of Madarai's faces out.

They don't have anything to do with me.

This wasn't the time to be thinking about them.

"And then, the ones who led this process of covering the evidence were none other than the top of the top, the Committee Board members themselves. They hid the fact that Izuru Kamukura was not just a survivor, but the perpetrator of the entire incident."

"And that's...where this Ex-School Building comes in?"

After not doing so for quite some time, I responded, and Kamishiro-kun quickly nodded.

"Either way, there's no reason to ignore the place where the incident occurred. Might as well check it out while we're here carefully snooping around, right?"

While descending from the 2nd floor stairs to the 1st floor stairs, Kamishiro-kun continued going on indifferently.

"But what really was a miscalculation on the school's side was...while they were moving along assuming they covered up the incident, there was still another troublesome individual that hadn't been dealt with."

"Junko Enoshima..."

The moment I spoke those words, we reached the 1st floor.

"...Over here, come with me."

Without a moment of hesitation, Kamishiro-kun continued to walk forward.

"The first person to discover the truth of that incident was Junko Enoshima. Then, by dragging out Izuru Kamukura...she aimed to overthrow Hope's Peak Academy."

While continuing to walk, both Kamishiro-kun's destination and Resolution Phase seemed to be reaching the core.

"What happened afterwards was completely aligned with her plan. The disappearance of the Committee Board old men shows that. That was definitely her doing. She probably kidnapped them and forced Izuru Kamukura's whereabouts from them with brute force but...Junko Enoshima really is someone to fear. Geez, and just how is she Super High School Level Fashion Girl?"

Hearing Kamishiro-kun's words, that itchiness brought up a flashback, my memories were reviving.

This time it was that concrete room with those iron bars. Those corpses of the old men whose eyes were hideously sewn together were there.

"...Onee-chan. What are you doing just spacing out like that? Over here, over here!"

Kamishiro-kun was already standing far away, calling out towards me, and I responded.
"Oh, sorry..."

I jogged over to where Kamishiro-kun was standing. He stopped at the very end of the first floor hallway. There was nothing in front of him but walls.

"It should probably be around here..."

"What should be here?"

"...Ah! It's this!"

Raising his voice, he pointed towards a small opening in the wall.

"I borrowed this from the security guards outside but..."

While speaking he pulled out a long rod-like object from his pocket, it looked like some kind of key. Kamishiro-kun then inserted that key into the wall. A clink could be heard coming from his small hand.

"Jackpot! I was thinking it could've been this! I investigated like crazy all over this place but there weren't any other suspicious areas!"

Sounding very proud of himself, Kamishiro-kun turned the key.

Along with the sound of rumbling, the door slid open like one of those automated doors. Past that door led simply a straight, long and narrow passageway. An imposing double door could be seen standing at the end.

"W-What...is this place...?"

"I said it earlier didn't I? This is where Izuru Kamukura is hidden."

Kamishiro-kun sounded extremely excited.

"...Matsuda-kun is here too?"

"He could be already here or he could be on his way....either way, Yasuke Matsuda will definitely show up."

Kamishiro-kun then proceeded to step foot into the passageway, and I followed suit.

Our steps rang about in the cool, dim passageway as we walked straight forward towards the back. My lips were getting dry and I constantly felt the need to lick them.

When we finally reached the end we stopped for the time being.

Without saying anything, Kamishiro-kun put his hand on the door. Imitating his process I did the same, and I saw that he was taking a deep breath. It seemed that even he was a bit nervous. We then exerted pressure at the same time, and the doors opened with an exaggerated groan.

Past the door laid about 15 square meters of nothingness that spread out. With the ceiling and pillars all being completely bare, it was truly a dreary and tasteless room.

"...Onee-chan, over there."

Kamishiro-kun was pointing towards the corner of the room.

There stood a simple elevator one would see in a factory of some sorts.

"That must be it."

Immediately after he spoke, Kamishiro-kun energetically ran straight towards the elevator. While I stood in hesitation, he manually pulled open the doors to the elevator and shouted out.

"C'mon, hurry up! You want to meet Yasuke Matsuda right?"

Matsuda-kun

Those words pumped me up.

That's right. The only reason I came to this dangerous place was for Matsuda-kun. I'm sure everything will get resolved if I can meet Matsuda-kun. This nightmare, my brain, everything will be exceptionally resolved into a happy ending waiting for me.

That's why I have to go!

Determined, I ran straight towards the elevator and jumped on with that momentum.

The moment I got on, my legs began to tremble and, I knew I regretted it.

"...I'm sure this elevator was made with the sole purpose to hide Kamukura. Man, they really were exceptionally careful, here we go."

Sounding quite amazed, he then took out the control panel from the floor and put his hand on it. There were but only two buttons. "Floor 1" and "Floor B", Kamishiro-kun then pressed "Floor B" without any hesitation.

A ridiculously loud sound could be heard from the motor, and the floor began to heavily tremble. After I continued to tremble from uneasiness, the elevator began to steadily descend.

"...Hehe, exciting isn't it?"

Immediately, Kamishiro-kun began to raise his voice into a cheer.

"It looks like you really are enjoying this...aren't you afraid?"

"Ahaha, of course I'm afraid!"

Kamishiro-kun responded with a smile on his face.

"To be honest, I'm actually terrified, to the point where I want to run away. Man, it's the first time I've ever felt like this. I can't believe someone like me is getting scared over this...but, that's why this is so fun! After all, if I can overcome this fear, I'll develop even further as a spy! That's why I won't run away. For the sake of powering up as a spy, I won't run away!"

Then, a simple question floated into my head.

"Hey, Kamishiro-kun. Why are you-"

"Why am I so persistent about my talent? That's a silly question, Onee-chan."

He anticipated my question and responded.

"It's the same thing as asking a swimmer 'Why are you still swimming if it hurts so much?'...it's only natural to be so fixated on it. After all, that's all I have."

While talking, Kamishiro-kun raised his hands up as far as he could.

"Oh, Onee-chan, you should stretch out your body as well. To prepare for the unexpected you know? C'mon, puff out that chest!"

"...I'll pass."

"Ahaha! I thought you'd say that!"

After smiling with that innocent face, he returned to that serious look of his.

"If you take away my activities as a spy, I'd have nothing left. An extremely unnoticeable child...that's all I'd be. But I do have a talent. Because we have a talent, we can't choose how we live our lives. The moment we were given our talents, we already started living in our set scenario...ha, what a one-sided lifestyle huh?"

Because you have a talent you are assigned a predestined fate to struggle with. If that's called a one-sided lifestyle, that probably is an accurate definition.

"But, we actually desire that one-sided lifestyle ourselves. That's why we came to Hope's Peak Academy. To continue to struggle with the talents we're proud of. Along with the rest of the students of this school, you're the same aren't you Onee-chan? That's why we have to keep moving forward, no matter how scared we are. This isn't some cheap line like "Believe in yourself", this is our duty. If we ran away, that'd be like rejecting our very existence. That's why we have to continue to struggle."

Honestly, more than anyone else, my very being that continued to doubt myself, couldn't understand Kamishiro-kun's feelings at all.

After all, if I was scared, I could just run away.

It doesn't have anything to do with me.

"...Oh, but I'm not just scared, you know."

Kamishiro-kun appeared to be justifying himself.

"Well, it's true that I'm scared but...I'm just as excited however. Izuru Kamukura, Junko Enoshima, the elites of the Student Council, Yasuke Matsuda, and the Committee Board...the chance to resolve the chaos that intertwines all of them. I'm sure if I'd be able to solve everything, my name would be carved into Hope's Peak Academy's history. The legendary spy who rescued the Super High School Level Hope, Yuuto Kamishiro!"

"...Eh? Rescue?"

Without thinking I responded. Even though I've been listening all this time without a word, but that's why I was so interested in the wording.

"You mean what I meant by rescue? You know, Izuru Kamukura is the culprit of Hope's Peak Academy Worst Incident right?"

"The point is, Izuru Kamukura is a victim too, that's, what, I, mean, you know?"

Suddenly I felt like everything went silent, that's the bizarre feeling that washed over me.

"But, it's the Committee Board members who decided not to let anyone discover this "horrificing truth". That's why they hid only Izuru Kamukura down here using that reasoning...if I manage to uncover the real truth and chase down the "true culprit", wouldn't that be the level of something left behind in Hope's Peak Academy's history?" Suddenly, his eyes began to sparkle.

"I don't really want appreciation from the school or anything but, just think about it. The image of the principle kneeling with tears streaming from his eyes, thanking me....aha, ahahahaha!"

Kamishiro-kun, while smiling, began spinning around. The sight of excitement was similar to one of a dog greeting someone.

"Actually, I already imagined the whole thing! 'Hope's Peak Academy's savior, Super High School Level Spy, Kamishiro Yuuto!' or something! Ahahahahahahaha, now that would stand out! That would stand out like crazy! It stands out to the point where it would completely blow away my lack of presence!"

At that point, I felt like I finally caught a glimpse of his true feelings.

I'm sure he believed in his talent, and at the same time he detested it.

It was distorted, but most likely he was not the only one.

Anyone who would be assigned with a talent would probably somehow fall to towards that feeling.

And then it happened right after that.

clang

Along with that sound came heavy shaking, and the sound of the motor finally stopping rang out. It seemed that the elevator has reached its destination.

CHAPTER 12-B

"...Looks like we're here."

Finally ceasing his ridiculous dancing, he let out a quiet voice as the elevator calmly returned. And then while he walked towards the door,

"Now, I wonder if the Masterminds are already here..."

"Hold on."

Without thinking, I held onto the door Kamishiro-kun was heading towards.

"...Hm? What's wrong? You want a kiss before the decisive battle begins?"

"No, it's not that..."

I had a bad feeling about this. A really bad feeling. But nonetheless, I asked him. I had to ask him.

"Hey, what do you mean by Mastermind?"

Kamishiro-kun's eyebrows twitched.

"Ahhh, that was careless of me. I was planning to reveal everything about the accomplices once I captured everybody..."

He then licked his lips with a bitter smile.

"Accomplice..."

The only person who could fit that category would be that girl. Actually, she's the only person I could think of.

"You're talking about...Mukuro Ikusaba right?"

"Huh!? She's suspicious?!"

Unexpectedly, Kamishiro-kun appeared to be surprised.

"Wow, I didn't know that! Then that means there's two accomplices, huh? Well, well, well...this is just one huge family!"

This time, it was my turn to be surprised.

"Wait, if you didn't mean Mukuro Ikusaba, then..."

"Of course, I'm talking about Yasuke Matsuda."

At that moment, I was hit with shockwave so powerful that the word "shockwave" wouldn't even describe it properly. My heart began beating as fast as it could, it's agonizing screams reverberating all throughout my body. A cold shiver ran up my back, numbing my spine and taking my breath away.

"Well, I should probably tell you this right now but...Izuru Kamukura isn't someone who necessarily should be called the culprit in the first place. He was just some poor fellow who got wrapped up in all this chaos. The real person who set this all up was Junko Enoshima. Basically, she wasn't just the first to discover this case, but the Mastermind pulling the strings from the shadows. The one who secretly worked as an assistant for her is none other than Yasuke Matsuda...but I wonder if it's weird for a man to be doing that sort of thing." [Okay, I don't know if this is a pun or if the characters used for "assistant"

in this case have a feminine connotation or not but, the first two characters used in 女房役(assistant) mean something along the lines of a wife or a female advisor, so I'm guessing that's why Kamishiro mentions Matsuda being a man.]

Kamishiro-kun's starting point for his Resolution Phase was such an unexpected topic that all I could do was stand there and listen.

"I'm pretty sure those two are the only ones aware of their relationship. Well, the school doesn't know about it at least. Otherwise they wouldn't even request help from Yasuke Matsuda in the first place...or maybe that was the very reason...anyway, as a result, Enoshima was able to successfully avoid investigation from the school."

I became a brainless mannequin that couldn't even perform the simplest of responses.

By the way, who is this Yasuke Matsuda he's been talking about? What Yasuke Matsuda would that be?

"But, cooperating with them wasn't the only thing Yasuke Matsuda did. Like I said before how the disappearance of the Committee Board members was the work of Enoshima...It appears that Matsuda was involved with that case as well. Man, they really are a great combination!"

I had no idea what he was talking about.

In fact, I rejected comprehension of his words with all my might.

By learning things I already don't want to know, my head will hurt. My chest will suffer. I'll feel like throwing up.

"Also, the conclusive evidence that ties them together...I've seen it. Well, it was because of witnessing that evidence that I was able to get this far to the truth but..."

I don't want to hear any more!

But as if stabbing me, he continued talking.

".....Junko, Enoshima, and, Yasuke, Matsuda's, love, scene."

Junko Enoshima and Yasuke Matsuda's love scene?

What is that.

Really, what is that.

What is that. Really, what is that. What is that. Really, what is that. What is that. Really, what is that. What is that. Really, what is that. Really, what is that. What is that. Really, what is that. What is that. Really, what is that. What the heck is that?????

I heard the sound of something crashing down.

It was the sound of my nerves crashing down dominos in a chain reaction. The dominos with the words "Yasuke Matsuda", "Junko Enoshima", and "Love scene" written on them all came crashing down like an avalanche.

Everything was arranged.

Everything was arranged by Junko Enoshima.

My relationship with Matsuda-kun. All my feelings towards Matsuda-kun, were arranged by her.

Matsuda-kun. Matsuda-kun. Matsuda-kun. Matsuda-kun. Matsuda-kun.

Matsuda-kun?

Betrayed. that word played in the back of my ears.

Betrayed, fooled, used, manipulated, that was the truth.

The truth of this incident.

Yasuke Matsuda. Junko Enoshima. Love Scene. They clattered as they were crashing down.

At the same time the door was clattering while Kamishiro-kun was prying it open.

"C'mon, Onee-chan. For the time being, let's get out of here. We'll talk about the rest once everyone's together...c'mon, hurry up, hurry up!"

Still in a daze, I was pushed out of the elevator by Kamishiro-kun.

As I staggered out clumsily, I found myself in a massively tall circular hall, it was like a miniature theater.

"Hey, this place is pretty nice."

Kamishiro-kun's voice coming from behind me echoed across the hall.

"Yep. This could actually be a fitting stage for my Resolution Phase to begin in."

It certainly looked like a stage developed with something in mind. There was nothing there. There wasn't anything that would give the impression of anyone living here.

Interior design was kept to a minimum with wallpaper and carpets, and the only furniture were a bed and a drawer. There was a bare western-style toilet sitting in the corner as well. Either a wide extravagant prison, or a low-budget play setting. That was the impression it gave.

Although what drew my attention more was, the fact that no one was there.

Junko Enoshima, Mukuro Ikusaba, Matsuda-kun, or even Izuru Kamukura who was supposed to be hidden here, none of them could be seen.

This was a situation instead of any of the important individuals Kamishiro-kun just spoke of, only the outsiders Yuuto Kamishiro and Ryouko Otonashi were standing.

But, I wondered if that really was so.

Maybe I've been making a huge misunderstanding. All this time I've thought that I hadn't have met Izuru Kamukura even once, but I wonder if that really was the case?

Maybe he's been watching over me all this time. Maybe the person I've been looking has been watching over me all this time.

Basically, Izuru Kamukura's true identity was-

Yuuto Kamishiro?

I immediately turned around.

But, Kamishiro-kun wasn't there.

The moment I thought that, my vision perceived Kamishiro-kun's appearance.

He was crouching at my feet.

No, he was more like kneeling down on the ground.

But even so, our eyes met.

I instantly jumped back.

My shock towards such an illogical development.

My horror towards such an incoherent result.

The pressure in my skull grew to a point where it wouldn't be surprising if my nose started to bleed, and my [nerves?] began trembling to the point where they wouldn't connect properly.

Kamishiro-kun, unrelated to him kneeling down on the ground, was looking not at the floor, but at the ceiling.

That's impossible.

To turn one's head all the way towards their back, that's impossible, for, a, living, human. Basically, that's what it was.

He was already not one of the living.

Kamishiro-kun with his head turned 180 degrees back and glaring at the ceiling was completely stiff.

The only thing that appeared to be living was the red stream of blood dabbling out of his mouth.

He would already show no response to anyone's voice, or anyone's words.

This was too much for me.

It was so much for me to the point where my conscious couldn't fully take on the scene of someone dying in front me. Due to that, all my reactions slowed down. If this was true, I would have already ran away from here. After all, the first thing to come to mind would be the fact that the person who did this to Kamishiro-kun must be very close by.

But, I was too slow.

"Poor kid."

A figure appeared next to the elevator.

It was a slim fair-skinned man, wearing a dirty shirt and pants that were of Hope's Peak Academy.

"If only he didn't meddle with Junko Enoshima's affairs...then maybe he wouldn't have met such a brutal end."

Letting out those words with his face down, not one single emotion could be felt.

"W-Who are you?"

While I inquired, trembling, he lifted his face as if he only just noticed me.

"Are you...talking to me?"

He looked exhausted.

A face of someone who lost everything.

The face of someone who lost all his thoughts, all his senses, and all his emotions.

"...You don't remember me?"

After the man responded with a cold voice, he spoke again with an even colder one.

"Why don't you remember?"

"W-Why I don't remember...well...I-I easily forget things..."

Struck by fear and confusion, I was in complete panic.

"U-Um...hold on a minute please!"

Flustered, I dropped my eyes towards Ryouko Otonashi's Notebook, and it was at that moment.

I was hit by that wave of itchiness.

That itchiness soon turned into pain. But it was a pain that brought fever. It was like warning signal. The frictional heat coming from the conflict of the remembering Ryouko Otonashi and the forgetting Ryouko Otonashi, that was the cause of the pain.

"Does Izuru Kamukura ring any bells?"

"Eh....?"

Hearing the words coming from that unexpected murmur, the pain went away all at once.

"...Is that true?"

The man right in front of me was, Izuru Kamukura.

The result of Hope's Peak Academy's collaborative effort, Hope's Peak Academy's symbol.

The man known as Super High School Level Hope.

Then, why?

He looked at me with eyes full of sadness as if he was begging me to rescue him from a bottomless swamp.

Why was he looking at me with such sad eyes?

I don't know. I don't know but, those eerie eyes caused me to avert my eyes from his without thinking, but my gaze landed on the eyes, seemingly searching for salvation, of the corpse of Kamishiro-kun, and I once again averted my eyes in a panic.

"It would have been better he didn't find out..."

Possibly following my gaze, he muttered as he looked down on Kamishiro-kun.

"If he didn't get involved, it wouldn't have ended this way..."

I felt like those words were aimed at me as well, and immediately I felt as if my life was in danger.

"But, you're different."

"Huh...?"

"Everything I've done so far...you have a need to know."

A need to know, Huh? Why me?

Before I could ask that question, he let out a big sigh.

"Besides...I also need more time to think...that's why I've decided to talk a bit more before I make my decision..."

Mumbling to himself, it was as if he was only reciting from a script. Scared of his current state, I began to try looking around the room without getting noticed. But, other than a ventilation duct, there didn't seem to be any place where I could escape to. The only exit was the elevator, in which Izuru Kamukura was standing, blocking the entrance.

"Well...I guess I should start with Junko Enoshima's goals."

Scratching his head while speaking, he didn't seem to bother meeting my eyes, rather, he seemed to be avoiding them.

"Hope's Peak Academy's Worst Incident doesn't really mean much to Junko Enoshima in the first place..."

"...Eh?"

With just those words, my attention was fully drawn.

Hope's Peak Academy's Worst Incident...doesn't mean much?

"Junko Enoshima just wanted to stir up the pent-up emotions of the Preparatory

Department. She got the Super High School Level Hope involved in that incident solely for that reason, and then incited those guys...no, it wasn't something simple like inciting, it was brainwashing."

"Brainwashing..."

Pain along with violent itching brought up that scene in my mind.

The monitor's visuals I saw past the Monokuma Heads in the underground facility.

Crushing heads, cut faces, agonizing screams, the Mutual Killing red lumps of flesh.

"She used me and the student council as sacrifices solely for that purpose. For the guys who were just treated as leftovers, she threw the school's proud elites into a game of Mutual Killing...it truly was the worst incident wasn't it?"

"Mutual Killing...?"

While bearing the tight tension that wrapped around my chest taking my breath away, I squeezed the question out of myself.

"M-Mutual Killing...what exactly do you mean?"

"First of all, Hope's Peak Academy's Worst Incident wasn't just simply a mass murder, it was Mutual Killing instigated by Junko Enoshima."

Instigated by Junko Enoshima.

Mutual Killing?

Huh? Killing each other?

"Enoshima used the Ex-School Building due to its state as a closed off vicinity, locked the Student Council and Super High School Hope inside, and caused them to kill each other utilizing various traps. Scattering weapons, threatening to kill everyone if a murder didn't occur, murdering in plain sight to demonstrate a lesson, and so on. She was trying to make them doubt each other, to kill each other...it was almost like she was just wanted to experiment. She really is messed up..."

Kamukura was talking as if it were someone else's affairs. Trapped between fear and confusion, all I could do was stand there and listen.

"...And then we ended up killing each other. There was no other hope of living. Enoshima had the Preparatory Department watch the school's prized Student Council and Super High School Level Hope our disgusting methods of killing and staining each other with despair. Those scenes were vividly presented."

He then paused and took a breath.

But soon his emotionless voice once again echoed across the room.

"I'm sure she planned everything to have Izuru Kamukura survive at the end. It was the worst ending for the guys at the Preparatory Department...to see their hated Super High School Level Hope kill everyone else's hope and survive, it must have been an especially "bad ending" for them...not only that, the school hiding this sin was probably also what Junko Enoshima had planned. That's why the Preparatory Department grew to not only despise Super High School Level Hope, but the entire school."

In the end, everything went completely as Junko Enoshima had planned.

Everything followed her scenario perfectly.

"B-But, for what reason...for what reason did she brainwash the Preparatory Department? That must have been to destroy Hope's Peak Academy as well..."

"...Not only that."

Kamukura then finally looked at me.

Peeking from the small opening in his long pitch-black hair, he stared at me.

"Her goal is...much more outrageous."

"O-Outrageous?"

"To her...brainwashing the Preparatory Department was merely planting the seeds. The Worst Incident for Hope's Peak Academy...that's all that is to her.

Kamukura mercilessly hurled those words towards me. I was controlled only for that purpose, and then destroyed. I was too late in realizing it...no, I was just desperately trying not to realize it. I didn't want to believe that she was so obsessed with despair, that's the truth. The despair-filled truth that I'm involved with this incident."

"H-Hey...What does you and Junko Enoshima have to do with each-"

"What do I have to do with?"

His words were suddenly filled with intense emotion for just a moment.

"What does this incident mean to you? Are you going to go with your classic 'nothing to do with me'? If it has nothing to do with you, why are you remembering it? If it really has nothing to do with you...then it'd be best to just let that memory be lost forever."

"...Eh?"

Why does Kamukura know my saying?

And how did he know about me remembering?

"I was right, wasn't I? About you remembering? That's why you can't remember me? You remembered that I wasn't a particularly important person to you...so that's why you can't remember?"

Kamukura then revealed his eyes, their glint was tainted with deadly hatred.

"...You're such a bitch."

"Huh....?"

Then, an impossible thought floated into my head.

In order to deny that impossible thought, I asked.

"...W-Who are you? You're not Izuru Kamukura?"

"Of course I'm not you imbecile."

He then spat out those words.

"I'm Yasuke Matsuda."

CHAPTER 13

"In the end, you didn't remember. You remembered other things, just not me...damn it, this is just horrible. For you to believe me so easily when I said I was Kamukura...this really is just horrible. Does my existence barely mean anything to you?"

"...Huh? Eh? W-What?"

I didn't know what to say. An intense chill assaulted my spine, and my teeth began to chatter like a drum.

"A-A-Are you really...M-Matsuda-kun...?"

"The real Izuru Kamukura has been taken from here long time ago. That means you and I are the only ones left...almost as if someone planned this all out."

That impossible string of thought that floated in my head took the form of a concrete truth. I desperately opened up Ryouko Otonashi's Notebook and flipped through the pages in a frenzy, searching for anything that would deny this impossible truth.

Then, after a while, my hands stopped.

In the Notebook were an amazing amount of portraits detailing Matsuda-kun. Looking up and confirming the individual in front of me one more time, the scattered puzzle pieces in my thoughts immediately were placed back together.

"B-But why...? How come I'm not-"

The heartbeat in my chest, the rise of emotions-

"...I know. You're not feeling anything."

Ironically, those words proved that he was Matsuda-kun.

After all, the only other person who knew my method in recognizing Matsuda-kun was, Matsuda-kun himself.

"That's because you're beginning to remember things again. Because you've began to regain your memory...you've stopped thinking about me."

"...Eh?"

"In the end, that shows how my existence wasn't anything special to you. But, you forgot about that fact...that's why you were filled with such emotion towards me."

Matsuda-kun isn't important to me?

Because I forgot that, I thought he was important to me?

"W-What are you talking about...I don't get it..."

Then that intense itching entered my brain again.

I remembered. The things I would have said to Matsuda-kun when meeting him, the things I would have done when meeting him, why I wanted to even meet him so bad in the first place. I remembered the reasons for everything.

"W-What is this...why..."

Suddenly, I wasn't able to believe anything.

Not Matsuda-kun, not myself,

Not even the world.

I spontaneously began stepping back. But, those legs immediately began to stop. Behind me stood a wall blocking my way, so I just stopped and stood there.

Matsuda-kun began taking steps as if pursuing me, impatiently moving forward.

"M-Matsuda-kun? What's wrong...?"

I cried out with a voice tinged with terror.

He responded with a pale face.

Tension building to the point where it could take my breath away, filled with fear I spoke that name.

"C-Could it be...Junko Enoshima's fault?"

He stopped in his tracks and stared at me with a piercing glare.

"...Ah, that must it be it."

That sharp glare felt as if it pierced my entire body.

These are Matsuda-kun's eyes?

Are you really Matsuda-kun?

I quickly swallowed those words almost coming out of my throat. I could tell that they would only make matters worse.

"...Hey, Matsuda-kun. Let's stop this."

Being cornered by Matsuda-kun like this, pleading was all I could do.

"How about we just head back to the laboratory? We could just relax and chat while you perform treatment on me. If we do that...everything will go back to normal!"

By the end of my pleading, my voice changed into a scream.

After all, this is just wrong!

This has to be wrong!

"...It's already too late."

But, Matsuda-kun turned his head.

"I can't go back anymore. Neither you nor I...we can't go back..."

Hearing his freezing voice, my whole body quickly began to grow cold.

"W-Why are you saying that?"

"Why are YOU spouting these cruel words."

Continuing with that freezing voice, he spoke with rage and irritation.

"You still can't remember what I've done to protect Junko Enoshima? I see, then I'll make you remember."

"I-It's alright! Let's just forget about this and get away from this place!"

"Nothing will change even if we forget, no one knows that better than you do!"

"I don't know anything!"

Reaching my limit, I shrieked with all my might.

But Matsuda-kun, without paying it mind-

"...Alright, just hear me out."

But, why was he speaking with such a sad face?

I'm the sad one here.

"Hope's Peak Academy's Worst Incident...everything changed because of it. No, I finally realized it because of that incident. The fact that my life which I thought was completely normal, was actually a fake scenario set up to control me...."

Those words were not directed towards anyone, not even me, but towards himself.

"I've been fooled by Junko Enoshima all this time...completely fooled...but even so, I couldn't stay away from her...I thought I could save her. I thought I would be able to stop her...that's what I was made to believe."

His voice immediately began to stain with bitterness.

"In order to protect her, I concealed her existence itself. But regardless of that, she went ahead and even killed the Committee Board members...that's why I went as far as to hide those corpses. I dealt with the evidence for her sake."

As my ears took in his words, my mind began playing through all the scenes that had occurred up to this point. There was no time to even feel the itching.

"Not only that...I even murdered people for her sake. In order to silence Souhshun Murasame, who knew the truth about the incident...it's the same with that Yuuto Kamishiro...for her sake, I couldn't let them live. That's why...I killed them..."

I was completely submerged by the torrent of truth blasting out of Matsuda-kun. But there was something I needed to know no matter what, so I struggled to keep my head above the waves as I attempted my question.

"I-Is she really that important...? Junko Enoshima...is really that...i-important to you...?"

"She is."

Matsuda-kun responded with no hesitation.

"W-Why is she...so important to you?"

As my tears of confusion and fear pushed me against the flood, I struggled forward as I frantically raised my feeble voice.

"It's because of what she said to me. What she said to me when I lost what was once important to me. 'From now on, I'll be what's important to you.' It was ridiculously impudent...but thanks to that impudence, I was prevented from being all alone. She's not family, a lover, or even a friend...but she's someone just as important to me as any of those."

Just as important as any of those, that's how Matsuda-kun felt about Junko Enoshima.

It felt like everything was over.

No, rather, everything was over from the beginning. I had no chance of winning from the start.

Someone who had no past had no chance of competing with Junko Enoshima.

Frustration, jealousy, there was none of that.

'It's over' was all I could feel.

I let out a huge breath. Contained in that breath was my resignation to the entire world.

And then it happened.

A clashing sound could be heard, and Matsuda-kun instantly turned around.

The scene past his shoulder was laid out for me.

I could see a girl standing in the elevator.

"Look's like...I was right on time..."

With showy makeup as if straight from a fashion magazine, and huge inflated fluffy blonde hair. The uniform was popped open enough for a ridiculous amount of cleavage, along with an insanely short skirt from which long, slender white legs ran down.

"Junko Enoshima!"

I shouted out with confidence.

"Junko Enoshima...?"

Matsuda-kun mumbled mixed with doubt.

Huh?

"Oh, it's not like I came here to get in your way or anything..."

Without even a word being said, she began explaining herself.

"I just came here to provide the supplementary explanation...it appears to be the right scenario for this..."

The blonde haired girl with showy makeup unmatchingly spoke in a hesitant manner, wait, isn't that kind of weird?

"Um, well this explanation...you can probably tell from my appearance but, Needs be that I am to follow Junko-chan's Scenario, only to enact this part...yeah, that's what this is."

Then I was once again attacked by that severe itching. It was so bad that I felt like I wanted to claw my hands into my brain, and then immediately after that-

Along with feeling like my vision opened up, I remembered.

I remembered the face of the girl standing in front of me.

This face I've been seeing was not Junko Enoshima, but someone else.

That's right, that would be Mukuro Ikusaba's face.

But, at the same time another question floated up in my head. If the me right now was able to recognize Mukuro Ikusaba, what about the past forgetful me? Showy makeup, blonde hair, popped open uniform, insanely short skirt, if I saw that disguised girl, would I be able to connect things together and realize it's Mukuro Ikusaba?"

"Then, does this mean...the Junko Enoshima I've know all this time..."

"I'm sorry."

The girl bowed her head.

"To explain things...the Junko Enoshima you've met was really me disguised as her."

Disguised...*Basically, a fake?*

"But, it's not like I did that because I wanted to...it was because Junko-chan told me to...that's why even my lines were set up by Junko-chan..."

Then, what about the real Junko Enoshima?

"So, this is the most important part but, the reason why I did all of this was-"

"Because I hid Junko Enoshima, right?"

Matsuda-kun's irritated words interrupted her.

"Because I hid Junko Enoshima, the real her is gone...and taking advantage of that, you become Junko Enoshima. Doing so, you make this one believe in Junko Enoshima's existence."

"...U-Um, what are you guys talking about?"

Make me believe in Junko Enoshima's existence? But why?

I was completely lost.

"Basically, Enoshima anticipated my actions. She saw through my plan in hiding her...and is now simply spectating my actions in amusement."

Spectating?

I frantically looked around the hall. There must have been something here indicating that someone was spectating us but, there weren't any peeping holes or hidden cameras anywhere. Huh? Why?

"This is ridiculous...to think she'd be this driven by despair...I don't want to believe this but, she must have gotten near me at some point..."

Whatever he was about to say, it quickly faded away.

I was already incapable of understanding his feelings.

His frustration towards Junko Enoshima.

His resentment against Junko Enoshima.

To the point of despair, I couldn't understand anything.

But, there was one thing that was clear to me.

Once again to the point of despair, very clear to me.

"He must love her...but at the same time, hate her right?"

"That's right..."

Matsuda-kun quietly nodded.

He confirmed my thoughts.

I was right to give up.

There was nothing I could but to give up and let everything end.

This is the end of my world.

This is the end of the world of Matsuda-kun and I.

The moment I gave up, the curtains of my soul began to slowly fall- *thump*

Huh?

"That's why...I have to end this."

While covering his face with both hands, Matsuda-kun let out a huge sigh. He then lifted his face with eyes brimming with unwavering determination.

"It's likely that my desire to protect her was...true despair. That's why unless I end this...my despair won't end either."

That was the voice of someone who gave up on everything.

"That's why, I have no choice but to end this..."

His eyes were full of anger, sadness, love, and hatred, all boiled and concentrated together. But even then, there was a mysterious calmness expressed on his face. *thump thump*

Huh? But why?

"I didn't want Junko Enoshima to get involved with others...I thought I would be protecting her that way..."

Matsuda-kun began to close our distance at a slow pace.

"That's why I hid her...that's why I desperately tried to hide her..."

thump thump thump thump

As Matsuda-kun drew closer, the beats in my heart grew louder and louder.

"But it was pointless. My actions did nothing. What I did meant nothing to Enoshima...in the end, there was nothing she could do but to inflict despair on anyone involved with her. That's why this is despair...the fact that I finally understand that."

I finally understood as well.

The thumping in my chest, I just now remembered.

The moment I gave up on everything, I remembered my feelings towards Matsuda-kun.

This must be because of the Scenario Junko Enoshima set up.

In order for despair, she had me finally remember it.

"That's why I've decided...to end things once and for all."

Matsuda-kun finally stopped in front of my eyes.

The distance between us was to the point where our feet almost touched, and while I felt the continuous heartbeat in my chest, I felt dizzy with blood rushing to my head as I looked at him.

Then, as if about to embrace me, he took those hands and squeezed them around my neck.

I was done for.

There must have been no other way. After all, Junko Enoshima was an important existence for him. Seeing how no one loved Matsuda-kun more than I did, I understood that.

But, to the very end,

I wanted to die in the world of Matsuda-kun and I.

By the very end I remembered.

I finally remembered everything.

At the same time, everything crumbled apart.

The scenery I perceived to be an immutable existence, easily, and then completely crumbled apart. It was like that sand castle. No matter how elaborate or stable it appeared to be, it easily crumbled apart like that sand castle. My entire body's skin, muscle, bones, all like dry sand crumbled apart, and I faded away.

Everything crumbled away, and went back to normal.

My world ended, and her world was created.

That would be my, Ryouko Otonashi's, final moment.

Then, everything finally returned back to normal.

CHAPTER 14

The strength within those hands gradually began to weaken as energy left the entire body. Then Matsuda finally relinquished his grip on that girl.

clang

A sound rang out from the ground. It was a knife tainted by blood. It was a knife engraved with Hope's Peak Academy's emblem. Blood could be seen dripping down around it, and soon it developed into a sizeable pool of red.

Putting my hand towards my stomach, I could feel a warm sensation.

Matsuda then returned his eyes to that girl.

"...Listen, you bitch."

He spoke while suffering.

"B-Before I die, you should know that...what I told you was a lie. That wasn't any kind of treatment. I've been...preventing, you, from, remembering, anything, at all..."

I already know that

I then heard that voice.

The mouth of that girl who responded began to swerve.

It must have been a smile.

Smiling from the taste of the knife that pierced Matsuda-kun's flesh.

And that's when Matsuda confirmed it.

The fact that the person known as Ryouko Otonashi, no longer exists.

"Um, by the way..."

Mukuro Ikusaba's murmuring voice could be heard.

"I was only supposed to appear in Junko-chan's likeness in front of the real one, but I accidentally got caught by Madarai at one point...but I really didn't caught by anyone else..."

"O-Obviously..."

Matsuda coughed up blood along with his resentful voice."

"A-Anybody who knew would easily be able to tell...even if you are sisters, you two are still different people...besides, the Enoshima who appeared before me...is definitely the real one."

Hearing the words "different people", Ikusaba, as if annoyed, turned her eyes away from him and instead placed them only on that girl and spoke.

"That's why...for this case, besides me being disguised as Junko-chan, the real Junko-chan conducted her own secret plans as well...it's just that, she herself did not even realize that...meaning, Junko-chan was deceived by herself."

"I-In the end...everything went just as planned...from the very beginning straight to the end..."

Matsuda spoke to that girl as well. While speaking, his consciousness was beginning to fade away, and just standing appeared to be a struggle. But even so, his frail gaze continued to focus on that girl.

"B-But there's one thing I don't understand...why you planned such a troublesome turn of events. Why you went so far to have me take away your memory...in order to escape investigation from the school...it doesn't sound pleasant at all...but even so, you were able to push through all of it. T-Then why..."

Failing to keep his ground, he finally sat down. But Matsuda continued his interrogation, resolute on obtaining his answer.

"W-Was it to...p-pull me, who was always thinking of you, into despair?"

That girl then began to finally move.

She gently caressed his face with her hand in an almost lovingly way, and sat down next to him, paying no matter to the blood spread around the area.

She then drew Matsuda's face, whose eyes were beginning to drift away, towards her own, and whispered.

I'll tell you.

That whisper was filled with a gentle feeling love, but it soon radically changed.

"Are you fucking kidding me? Don't get so ahead of yourself! There's no way in hell I'd go through this pain in the ass mess just to bring you into despair! What the hell are you thinking!?"

As soon as those words finished, that girl immediately thrust her hand away from Matsuda's face.

Doing so, Matsuda collapsed onto the pool of blood he created.

"Y-You don't give a damn...is what you're saying, huh..."

Matsuda muttered those words as he laid on his back gazing towards the ceiling.

Staring at that face from straight above was that girl. Their faces were close enough for the tips of their noses to easily touch. But even so, his gaze didn't exactly match up with hers, as it began to absent-mindedly falter.

"I guess...I don't have anything to with this...t-that really was the case after all..."

Because of the overflowing blood, I felt an unnatural warmth developing in the back of my throat. But, that soon faded away.

"H-How long have you felt that way...has it been since...we were children?"

"Upupupupu."

That girl's face then warped into a cruel smile.

"What if I told you...that the reason your mom got that way was because of me? What kind of face would you show me?"

"...Wha-?"

Pain as if a sharp needle passed through his heart was displayed.

"You're, you're not serious...are you?"

As he spoke with that shivering voice, bits of blood splattered onto that girl's face from his mouth. It stood out more than even her cruel, inhumane smile.

"A-answer me..."

While Matsuda grew more and more grave, Enoshima on the other hand seemed to fall into ecstasy. Without giving any response, that girl just continued to watch as she cupped her chin in her hands.

Matsuda's soul was falling into the depths of despair.

His own meaning of life was thoroughly and decisively violated, and was then rejected.

He had completely given in to despair.

"P-Please...respond..."

His clinging words barely formed into words at all.

"C'mon...what's your answer...Junko Enoshima..."

That was the end.

Without ever hearing his answer, Yasuke Matsuda died.

Completely submerged in despair, he died.

CHAPTER 15

Once she confirmed everything had ended, Junko Enoshima slowly got up.

But, she ceased her actions and decided to look down for a while longer.

She stared at the Yasuke Matsuda who had experienced his last breath not too long ago.

"There's no way this would have nothing to do with me..."

There was a hint of sadness laid somewhere in that murmuring voice.

"After all...you were the most important person to me of all..."

Those were her true feelings.

Yasuke Matsuda was an especially important existence for Junko Enoshima. Ever since they were children, he always stood up for her, always continued to unconditionally love her, and above all, just being by his side made her heart feel warm.

But, she killed off that existence with her own hands. She stepped on it, forced it past the gates of despair, and brutally murdered it.

"This...this is..."

But, that's what Enoshima had desired.

She loved him so much, that irreplaceable existence, more important than anyone else, almost obsessed with him to the point of insanity, always wanting to be within his embrace, even living in a world with only him would be fine. And by losing that incredible existence, just how much despair would I fall in?

She nurtured her love for Matsuda all this time just to get a taste of that feeling. Seeing her loved one be smothered by despair during his last moments, she pretty much lived to experience that spectacle.

Finally getting to taste that despair,
"...INCREDIBLE!!"

It was more than anything she could have hoped for.

"Too depressing! Too good! My chest is gonna tear open! This is true self-loathing! I want to die! This is! This is the despair that comes from losing a loved one!"

While Enoshima's being was assaulted by that despair, she kicked Yasuke Matsuda's corpse with all her strength.

"Amazing, amazing! Amazingamazingamazingamazingamazing!"

While absorbed in screaming, she kicked the corpse of the one she so dearly longed for with no mercy whatsoever.

Flowing out of her eyes were a continuous stream of tears.

While those tears of delight, lament, and confusion overwhelmingly flowed, kicked her beloved's corpse until it was a lump of meat barely holding any resemblance to its original form.

"Upu...upupupu...upupupu. Upupupu. Upupupu. Upupupu. Upupupu. Upupupu.
Upupupu. Upupupu. Upupupu. Upupupu. Upupupu. Upupupu. Upupupu. Upupupu.
Upupupu. Upupupu. Upupupu. Upupupu. Upupupu. Upupupu. Upupupu."

CHAPTER 16

When Kyouko Kirigiri opened her eyes, she found herself at the infirmary.

The scene outside the window portrayed nightfall. It seemed that at some point the day had reached evening.

As Kyouko slowly rose out of her bed,

"Look's like you're awake."

A man's voice could be coming from the window. It belonged to Hope's Peak Academy's Principal, Jin Kirigiri.

"You were completely knocked out. Has work finally caught up to you?"

"How...long have I been asleep?"

"You wouldn't stay put so I had the school physician give you some medicine. It should still be in effect so things may still be a bit hazy. You should probably just relax for now..."

Her consciousness and sensations were certainly still a bit dim. Following orders from him was frustrating but, there isn't much one can do against the effects of medicine. With no other choice, Kyouko laid back down on the bed.

And then she remembered.

She remembered the moment when Mukuro Ikusaba came to assist her.

Being cornered by the Madarai brothers, she appeared at just the right time and saved her. But, why did she save her? Sure, there were classmates but, there were hardly any occasions of social interaction between them.

Putting that outside however, there was a more pressing issue at hand.

The girl that was with her when attacked by the Madarai brothers, Junko Enoshima, what happened to her?

She tackled that question in her mind in a very Kirigiri-like manner.

Then,

"...It appears that she was rescued by Ikusaba-kun as well. I'll save you the trouble of overthinking things...she's being temporarily hospitalized at one of the medical facilities in the teaching staff faculty building. Although the silver lining is well...how would I say this...due to the shock from that incident, it seems that she's recovered her memory."

"Memory...?"

"She'll soon return to her regular school schedule. But, it seems that she doesn't remember anything from when she lost her memory. Because that, there have been numerous confusing issues going on...and everyone has been taking care of her."

"I see..."

A classmate returning to class should have been a joyous occasion, but something didn't feel right.

Like something was being overdone.

"Also...there's something important I have to discuss with you."

His following words then completely brushed off Kyouko's doubt.

"...I'll be closing the investigation request on Izuru Kamukura."

"Eh...?"

Kyouko immediately rose up from the sudden report.

"...Why all of a sudden?"

Her question was one of urgency.

"Sorry but, I can't really talk about that."

"W-What are you-"

"Ok fine, I wasn't satisfied with the contents of your work...how does that work for you?"

Recognizing his lack of acknowledgement, Kyouko scrunched her eyebrows in inquisitiveness.

"...Then, what happened to Kamukura?"

"Speaking of which, just today the new Committee Board members got inaugurated to replace the old ones."

"Don't avoid the subject."

"Due to the members changing, decisions involving confidential information have increased. No matter what you have to say, I don't really have much freedom to be carelessly discussing our secrets."

That statement was a clear refusal. Hearing those words, all Kyouko could do was respond with a murmur of resentment.

"Why are you telling me this now..."

"Alright, in return, how about I reveal to you this confidential information we've been talking about? That is, if your pride as a detective would allow it."

His words were almost like a challenge. He was being like that for quite a while. The words "You were just being used this whole time." were likely. That kind of thought process was simple, but there was a feeling that the reason behind it couldn't be so simple. But, what caused that feeling?

Was it the intuition of a detective?

Or was it because he was her father.

She immediately shook her head.

Shaking off that last train of thought, she roughly responded.

"...I understand. I don't mind giving up on the request. However, there is one thing I would like to know."

Kirigiri was watching from outside the mirror in silence.

"...What happened to Yasuke Matsuda? And the Madarai brothers?"

A moment of silence passed, and Kirigiri let out a hefty sigh. He then turned his eyes and began walking towards the door of the infirmary. Kyouko followed his movements carefully with her eyes. He then stopped in front of the door, and without turning his back he spoke.

"Expulsion...that's how it seems they were dealt with..."

His words felt heavy, and a hint of anger could be heard among them as well.

"Not only that, it was the new Committee Board members' intention as well. To strictly conceal the incident under the darkness. Those involved, Matsuda-kun and Madarai-kun were expelled, and soon others will follow as well."

"...You aren't going to stop them?"

"All I did was receive the report. They're not even in the school building anymore. Even you probably would have difficulty in tracking them down."

Letting out another huge sigh, Kirigiri began to grind his teeth.

"Although, it sure was a convenient development...convenient to the point where one would think someone was manipulating the events from the shadows..."

But, he quickly turned his head, as if he regretted what he just said.

"...Even without any formal request, I'll still be looking into it."

Aimed towards the back of Kirigiri, were words full of determination.

Hearing those words, he responded without turning back.

"Detectives can't do anything until an incident ends...they're useless until all the victims show up...that's a trait that exists within even the most expert detectives. But I think you're different. I feel qualities coming from you that exceed ones of a detective. Those are words coming from witnessing your various talents up to this point. I think I'll be keeping them in mind."

"...What are you trying to say?"

Kyouko let out a stiff voice.

"There's no need for apprehending..."

Kirigiri then looked past his shoulder, towards Kyouko who was tight-lipped with anger, and an expression close to tears.

"One last thing. You're free to investigate on your own, however, if you happen to endanger yourself or attempt to bypass the school rules...I won't plan to show any mercy. Prepare yourself. If you can't keep that in mind, you'll be leaving this school."

Without waiting for any response from Kyouko, Kirigiri left the infirmary.

When entering the hallway, he let out yet another huge sigh.

Even though he was trying to keep her away from the incident for her own good, it still pained him. But she wasn't the type to just happily listen to orders. There wasn't anything to be done about that.

The situation was already out of Kirigiri's hands.

Just like the ex-Committee Board members who disappeared, the new ones would eventually become figures of valuable position in their various fields.

Soon after their inauguration, the termination of the Kamukura Project was announced.

It was their way of saying that the existence known as "Super High School Level Hope" never existed. It wasn't a very surprising turnabout. Kirigiri became the core, and the symbol of hope that Hope's Peak Academy raised and nurtured all these years, was abandoned unceremoniously.

Following these actions, the new Committee Board members' decisions and plans were quick and prompt. Through various methods, they were able to construct concealment for the incident. It appeared they were instructed by some other party.

All of a sudden, Kirigiri began to pick up pace as he continued down the hallway.

While walking at a brisk pace, he inadvertently glanced towards the window.

The idea that everything had ended was not present.

Rather, it felt like it was the start of a new turn of events.

Most likely, not a good turn of events.

A horrible incident was going to occur from this school, and then consume the world.

No one would be able to stop that.

From that prediction, Kirigiri felt an uncharacteristic chill creep on.

But, Kirigiri's decision was already set in place.

For the sake of the students, it might be time to speed up that plan. An area where even the new Committee Board members would not catch wind of, there was no other choice than the Ex-School Building.

With that thought in mind, Kirigiri began to fall into a dash. But he didn't realize it. He didn't realize what was happening to himself.

His mouth was began to faintly bend.

He must have been able to sense it. The talent holding the ability to throw the world into chaos was lurking somewhere in Hope's Peak Academy.

That was possibly why he was trembling from being enveloped by interest in this existence.

But, even so,

He had no way of knowing what laid ahead.

Eventually, that talent will inflict despair across the world, and that very despair will trample across even himself.

But Jin Kirigiri was still completely unaware.

CHAPTER 17

Back from her long period of absence, the first thing taken care of when returning to her dorm room was applying the makeup.

Looking at her reflection in the mirror, Junko Enoshima saw despair.

Geez, Matsuda-kun sure had horrible taste.

Reflecting in the mirror was a simply plain, normal, and uninteresting female high school student.

"...To think something like this was of value for despair."

I don't know if he picked something up from his mother or something-

Going over the sense of a loved one in despair while applying makeup, she next began to tidy up the room, beginning with picking off the numerous post-it notes saying "This is my room".

And then the Ryouko Otonashi Notebook...

Looking at this notebook brought back memories of Yasuke Matsuda. Remembering him, she could feel her chest tightening. Consumed by disgust at what she did to him, she was compelled to cry and scream out.

I want to forget this already! I want to just get rid of this notebook!

"Aha! All the more reason to keep this on hand!"

With an indescribable expression somewhere between woe and excitement, she flipped through the pages.

Suddenly, her hand stopped.

On that page laid a ridiculous amount of likeness portraits of Yasuke Matsuda.

"These horrible drawings are surprisingly heartrending...how exciting."

As expected, it seemed that her heart's wound wouldn't heal any time soon. But that's how it should be. After all, she went so out of her way and lost her memory to taste this despair.

Speaking of which, that wasn't the only reason she had her memory lost.

There was another goal in mind as well.

That reason was within the notebook within Enoshima's hands. Reports on Matsuda's methods in manipulating her memory were recorded in that very notebook.

That was her other reason.

Memory manipulation was required for the final stage of her plan to inflict further despair. That's why she wanted to test it. That's why wanted to test it on herself. She arranged for Matsuda to take away her memory, resulting in becoming a subject to that memory manipulation.

"I guess this is all one can expect from just an experiment...just becoming forgetful is only half-way progress, I guess Matsuda-kun just didn't try hard enough. Well, once I take care of it, I'm sure it'll turn out perfectly. Taking over a loved one's lovely research...I'll be sure to make use of it in the most despair-inducing way possible."

Her other reason for using Matsuda was for this experiment.

For that experiment, she anticipated Matsuda's actions and then proceeded to move freely within her own convenience.

That goes for others as well. She anticipated the results of everything, and manipulated those events at will.

By doing this, she finished her perfect development.

It was the same for even Enoshima herself.

She was able to control even her own actions, and experienced the greatest taste of despair.

"Yoo Hoo! I'm baaaaaack!"

Suddenly a strange voice rang out as the door to the room flew open.

Standing at the door was a blonde haired girl.

The one who disguised as Junko Enoshima, Mukuro Ikusaba.

With expression displayed on her face, her cheeks rose and formed a huge smile.

"Ahaha, were you surprised? I was hoping to surprise you a bit in commemoration for your return-"

"Do you think I'm retarded?"

But, Enoshima freezingly shot back.

"Are you trying to raise the tension or something? What are you going to do if someone sees you dressed like that? Are you going to take responsibility for that? Heck, are you even capable of doing that?"

"I-I'm...sorry..."

As if completely withered, her shoulders crumpled.

"Also, you barely even look like me! Are you even trying? In fact, do I even look that retarded? Do I?"

"Um, but I followed Junko-chan's written instructions completely..."

"I see, you can't do anything unless told, you really are retarded."

"I-I'm...really sorry!"

As she hurried to get changed, her eyes were completely blurred with tears.

"Man, and you still have that ridiculously skinny body! If you have time to perform in the military, you should try getting a body that men would actually like!"

"I-I'm sorry...please don't be mad anymore..."

While watching her sister's shoulders shake like a puppy being scolded, Enoshima once again stuck out her tongue(?).

Geez, I really got to rethink how I'm going to use this one.

Besides Enoshima having her sister disguise herself as Enoshima to fool her amnesiac self, there was of course one other goal.

It was another experiment. Mukuro Ikusaba's disguise was a key component in her future plan to inflict further despair.

Memory manipulation was also an experiment.

Mukuro Ikusaba's disguise was also an experiment.

No, there was more.

Forcing high school students into mutual killing and showing that visual to others to spread despair. That was, once again, also an experiment.

Everything was an experiment put into practice, killing two birds with one stone.

That's what Hope's Peak Academy's Worst Incident meant to Junko Enoshima.

Furthermore, the murder of the Committee Board members were part of that as well.

Besides forcing the location of Kamukura out of them, Enoshima wanted them to be replaced.

"Hmm, although the experiment this time around overall felt like it was missing some excitement...was it too psychotic? I wonder if I can make it even more excitingly psychotic...I guess forcing mutual killing right away is too stiff, maybe I should make it a game of some sort...yeah! That way, the murders might get a lot more dramatic!"

Of course, a mascot is necessary as well.

For this experiment, those brainwashed were dressed in sort of a cartoon character outfit but, that was no good.

That was just tasteless. There's room for tons of improvement.

"Um, well...so..."

Abruptly, Ikusaba's voice spoke out.

"Huh? What do you want?"

Enoshima clicked her tongue as she listened to what she had to say.

"Um...why didn't you hand over Izuru Kamukura over to the Preparatory Department?"

Hearing that, Enoshima clicked her tongue even louder.

"Man, you really are retarded...if they got to kill Kamukura, then they'd be satisfied just like that. That's no good. I want their uneasiness, complaints, and dissatisfaction to build up, and then explode all at once. Then they'd show their worth by becoming a mob, right? That's what they're there for."

"Oh, I see..."

A bitter smile revealed itself on Ikusaba's face as she nodded in understanding.

"Then, does that mean Kamukura is no longer needed...?"

"I don't really have anything in mind right now but...well, nothings going to happen if we just leave him be anyway. Besides, he's not anything like Super High School Level Hope anymore, he's someone who has fallen into the depths of despair!"

That was again, another result that followed her prediction.

In the end, everything moved along with Enoshima's will.

Everything fell perfectly in line with what Enoshima's ambition was.

Well, this experiment allowed me to taste despair, so I could say it was a success.

But, a little part in her still had hoped for something else.

She had hoped that the plan she worked so hard to concoct would fall into pieces despairingly.

This time it wasn't like that, but maybe someday I'll be able to taste that flavor of despair.

She even sowed some seeds for the purpose of that possibly occurring.

"Ahahaha! I really am amazing, aren't I!"

Without thinking she erupted into laughter.

"I even prepared a flag for when I myself would lose...I'm the very definition of a mastermind! Don't you think so, sister?"

"Yes..but your way of talking..."

"I got tired of this personality! How many fucking years have you been my sister?"

Shifting to a violent personality and shouting at her sister Ikusaba, she soon gave up on that as well and then began staring towards the window.

"...What's wrong?"

Despite Ikusaba's worried voice, she continued to stared at the window.

Out there was a parade.

Like a surging tidal wave, the parade was flowing through the school dorms.

I wonder what those in class are thinking looking at this right now.

I wonder if they're experiencing the death of their hope?

Enoshima quickly stood up and spoke with an energized voice.

"Alright, now that the tension is off the charts, let's go head to class! Our beloved classmates are waiting for us!"

"O-Ok..."

Just like that, Enoshima momentarily returned to her school life.

It was annoying getting friendly with others, but soon the spice of unbelievable despair will scatter about. Actually, I'm getting pretty excited.

"Alright! Let's enjoy the rest of our school life to its fullest!"

After all, that was her true motive.

Thus, the keywords were set.

The flag was raised.

Mutual Killing, Ex-School Building, Brainwashed Preparatory Department, Super High School Level Hope, Class 78, Hope's Peak Academy's Committee Board, Principle, Memory Manipulation, Mukuro Ikusaba's disguise, Monokuma.

It all begins from here.

The plan to create the strongest despair all starts from here.

The, World's, Most, Despair, Inducing, Incident, starts, from, here.

Predicting what will occur is simple. But not doing so would be more interesting. A stronger taste of despair will come on that way. But can I hold on for that long? Aah, what should I do?!

Just picturing that despair caused Enoshima's heart to jump.

Because Super High School Level Junko Enoshima,

Wishes for despair above anything else.

Finds hope within despair more than anyone else.

Finds hope?

"...What the hell? Me finding hope?"

Realizing that she had been embracing hope,

She fell into despair.

END